“The Forest People”

The Implementation of a Forest Project Based on an Image of “the Other”

Silje Jahre Frotvedt

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Department of Social Anthropology

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Abstract

The thesis builds on seven months of fieldwork in Paraguay, from January to July 2011. Most of my fieldwork was spent in the indigenous village Cuyabia in the Chaco, the northeast region of Paraguay. The main topic of the thesis is the implementation of a forest project in the village.

Through empirical examples I aim to illustrate how the forest project, which is implemented by the NGO Alter Vida, is based on an image the NGO has of the villagers of Cuyabia as "the forest people," which, as I try to depict, does not coincide with the everyday life in the village. The villagers have recently moved to the land where their ancestors lived, and the NGO is implementing the forest project with the aim to promote a sustainable development through conservation based on the villagers' traditional use of the forest. Most of the villagers in Cuyabia, however, have the last 50 years depended on wage labour, and have not been dependent on using the forest in a traditional way.

Since I spent most of my time in Cuyabia, my main focus will be on the village. As I will depict, however, both the cattle ranches that surround the land of Cuyabia, and the NGO Alter Vida influence the everyday life of the villagers. Hence, much of my focus will be on the villagers' encounters with the NGO Alter Vida and the neighbouring ranches.

Throughout the thesis I illustrate how the NGO and the ranchers produce stereotypes of the villagers, and how they act upon these stereotypes as if they were real. Further, I claim that the NGO's expectations of the forest project do not coincide with the villagers' expectations. I apply a time perspective in the analysis of their different expectations. Hence, I suggest that the villagers and the NGO have different perceptions of the future, which, as I will argue, affect how they act in the present. Towards the end of the thesis I will depict a conflict regarding the land of the village that emerged when my fieldwork was going towards the end.

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List of Acronyms

FAPI – Federation for the Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples

INDI – The National Institute of Indigenous Affairs

INDERT – The National Institute of Rural Development and Land

INFONA – The National Forestry Institute

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

REDD – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

SEAM – The Secretariat of the Environment

UNAP – Union of Native Ayoreo in Paraguay

UNDRIP – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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Chapter I: Introduction

At the end of January 2011, I went on my first trip to the village Cuyabia. I had been in Paraguay for one month, and had the week before finished a three weeks introduction course in Guaraní[1]. During my first month in the capital Asunción, I had spent several afternoons at the office of the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Alter Vida, a socio-environmental NGO that had kindly offered to help me find a community in which to do my fieldwork. Chala, one of the NGO representatives, had spoken warmly about the village Cuyabia. He explained enthusiastically that the villagers recently moved back to the land of their ancestors, after living in a community close to the Mennonite colonies[2] for the last 50 years. *"They want to return to their traditional life in the forest,"* Chala explained to me, and added that this was easier said than done, because Cuyabia is surrounded by cattle ranches, which are about to expand onto their land. I was fascinated by the story Chala told me. Alter Vida was in the beginning of the process of implementing a project in Cuyabia, with the goal of securing their land rights and conserving the forest through a sustainable use.

Early Monday afternoon I left Asunción with Chala, Cuyabia's main contact from Alter Vida, and a student from a Canadian University spending three months as a trainee at the Alter Vida office. After a day of travel on the bumpy roads of *TransChaco*, the route that goes all the way from Asunción to the Bolivian border, we spent the night in a house the NGO has access to in *el Cruce de Pioneros*, about 400 kilometres from the capital Asunción. We got up before sunrise the next day, and finally arrived in Cuyabia by noon. The sun was high in the sky; the temperature had reached 45 degrees Celsius. The air was humid and filled with mosquitoes. The smell of bonfire overcame us when we opened the door of the air-conditioned pickup, and the smell, as I would soon find out, was permanently present in the community. Unine, the leader of the community, welcomed us by shaking our hands. The rest of the community approached the pickup to have a look at what was going on. They did not say a word, but stared at us constantly.

[1] Guaraní and Spanish are the official languages of Paraguay. Over 90% of the rural
[2] The Mennonites are a strongly religious group that occupy large areas of land in the Paraguayan Chaco.

After we had put up our tents, a few meters away from where the houses of the village are located, the grown-ups left and went back to their own activities. The children however, stayed looking curiously at us, without saying anything, except for one or two that dared to ask if we had brought caramels or crackers, which we had not.

After we had settled-in, Unine came to our camp to talk about what kind of work the villagers wanted to carry-out with Alter Vida during this visit. On our way to Cuyabia, Chala explained to the student and me that it had taken him a while to gain Unine´s trust. He suggested that this was because the Ayoreo people[3] are shy. He added that they have had bad experiences with non-indigenous people as a result of years of exploitation and oppression by the government, the missionaries and the ranchers. The only communication between the community and Alter Vida was between Unine and Chala. The Alter Vida representatives did not visit the households in the community or converse with the other inhabitants. On this trip, I did not get any impression of how daily life was in the village or what the daily activities consisted of.

In contrast to what is normal in the dry Chaco province, the Paraguayan summer 2010/2011 had so far been wet and rainy, especially compared to the past few years, when the drought had made it almost impossible to cultivate fruits and vegetables, and difficult to get enough water for those that do not have the technology to reach, filter and desalinate groundwater. Unine and Chala agreed to first visit the pond near the village, from where the villagers get their water, assess the amount of water as well as bring water back to the community. The pond is located about 700 metres from the households of the village. At the time there was still no path directly from the village to the pond and there were no wells within the community to store the water. This was because the villagers had recently relocated from their first settlement by the entrance of the ranch Los Lazos. This was due in part to the new location's proximity to the pond and the road. We had to drive on the road to the pond, which meant it took at least four times longer than if we had taken a path directly from the households. After visiting the

[3] The villagers of Cuyabia belong to the indigenous group Ayoreo, which I will return to later in this chapter.

pond, Unine suggested to monitor[4] with the vehicle of the NGO on the other side of the property of the 14 000 hectares of land that belongs to Cuyabia, to check if intruders had trespassed onto their land to rob posts[5] of the species *Palo Santo*[6], as had happened various times before. Unine noted that we might not have time for the monitoring today, because it might start raining, he said, looking towards the sky. We all looked up at the cloudless sky, but could not see any sign of rain. *"Wow! How do you know that it will rain?"* the student asked Unine, evidently amazed and surprised by his statement. *"I heard on the radio"*, he answered. We all started laughing. When Unine had left, Chala and the student admitted that they had expected a different answer, *"something about the air and the sky, a smell, anything that has to do with traditional indigenous knowledge,"* Chala said. He had obviously not expected that Unine's weather report came from *Radio Paí Puku*[7]. Interestingly, radio was right; it did rain that afternoon.

How to Read this Thesis and Research Question

As the title indicates, this thesis concerns the implementation of the NGO Alter Vida's forest project in the village Cuyabia. The focus of the thesis is inspired by West (2006) who claims that: *"anthropologists and conservation practitioners who rely on analysis of conservation and development projects that do not recognize the multiple agencies and ideologies of differently positioned actors only see part of the complex story of environmental conservation in sites where there is much biological diversity"* (West 2006: 26). In line with West's statement, I have during my fieldwork spent time with the villagers in Cuyabia, the representatives from the NGO Alter Vida and, when possible, with the ranchers and local government officials. The aim was to get a wider

[4] Monitoring the land of Cuyabia with Alter Vida signifies to drive around the land of the community for observation and check that no one has entered their land or stolen posts from their property.
[5] A post is a long and sturdy piece of timber used for fence making.
[6] Palo Santo is a tree species at risk to get extinguished, and is thereby preserved in Paraguay. Its scientific name is Bulnesia sarimentoí (Naumann and Coronel 2008: 52). Palo Santo is requested as timber because of its hardwood. It is also requested for medical purposes, such as to cure the cold and muscular pain.
[7] Radio Pa'i Puku is a regional radio station that covers the Chaco region. The radio was used diligently by both indigenous and non-indigenous people to give messages to friends and relatives that live in places without mobile phone signal or other means of communicative. The radio is named after a catholic priest who was run over by a cattle transport, and died on the *Transchaco* route.

impression of the situation of the villagers in Cuyabia, and how they cope with everyday life. Since I spent most of my fieldwork time in the village Cuyabia, my main focus throughout this thesis will be the villagers, and the main location will be the village. In addition, I focus on the encounters Cuyabia has with the NGO Alter Vida and the ranchers – both physical encounters and encounters consisting of the different imaginations and perceptions the different parts have of each other. As I found out, both Alter Vida and the ranchers play a significant role in everyday life in the village. Alter Vida implements the forest project in Cuyabia with the aim to help the villagers to conserve the forest by a sustainable development based on their traditional use of the forest. As cattle ranches surround the land that belongs to the village, the villagers are not able to survive exclusively on forest products, and depend on working at the cattle ranches. Since the ranches are expanding, the possibility to survive on forest products additionally declines. Alter Vida bases the forest project on what they think the villagers want, while the villagers want to take part in the social and economical development, which they are reminded of almost every day as they interact with the ranchers. Hence, I argue that in the depiction of the implementation of the forest project in Cuyabia, the village, the NGO Alter Vida and the neighbouring ranches must be taken into consideration.

The introductory story is an example of the image Alter Vida has of the villagers in Cuyabia as *Ecologically Noble Savages* (Conklin & Graham 1995). The term noble savage dates back to the philosopher Rousseau, and identifies certain natives as innocent and free of corruption, in contrast to the destructive Western materialism (Conklin & Graham 1995: 696). Redford (1990) was the first to add the ecological emphasis to the term, which refers to indigenous peoples as natural conservationists that use the forest in a sustainable way (Conklin & Graham 1995: 697). The representatives from the NGO Alter Vida introduced me to the villagers in Cuyabia as "the forest people;" that they had recently moved back to the land of their ancestors to live in and of the forest in a traditional way, I was told. Even though the Alter Vida representatives do not use the term *Ecologically Noble Savage*, I suggest that their view of the villagers in Cuyabia as "the forest people" corresponds with the term *Ecologically Noble Savage.* I did not spend much time in Cuyabia before I understood that the image Alter Vida has of the villagers does not coincide with everyday life in Cuyabia. This imagination I will explore further

in the next chapters. I will emphasize that the image Alter Vida has of the villagers, as "the forest people" is not an image produced exclusively by them. Rather, the image builds on several factors, as literature written on the Ayoreo people and representations in media, among others, which I will explain later in this chapter. The villagers of Cuyabia recently resettled on the land of their ancestors after living approximately 50 years in a village close to a Mennonite colony. Alter Vida assisted the villagers in the resettlement in August 2010, and has thereafter visited the village regularly.

Foucault has indicated that action and intention often produce unintended consequences by claiming that "people know what they do, they frequently know why they do what they do, but what they don't know is what what they do does" (Foucault cited in West 2006: 186). Throughout this thesis I argue that Alter Vida bases the implementation of the forest project on the image they have of the villagers in Cuyabia as "the forest people." I illustrate that Alter Vida and Cuyabia have different expectations to the forest project. Drawing on these statements I suggest that the forest project may have unforeseen consequences, as it builds on the imaginations Alter Vida has of the villagers. Towards the end of my stay in Cuyabia, a conflict regarding their land emerged. As the conflict emerged, the focus of both the villagers and the Alter Vida representatives was directed exclusively towards the conflict. As the main topic of my research is the implementation of Alter Vida's forest project, I aim to answer the following questions throughout this thesis:

Does Alter Vida's image of the villagers in Cuyabia as "the forest people" concur with everyday life in the village?

How does the villagers' expectations to the forest project differ from Alter Vida's expectations?

How do the ranchers affect everyday life in Cuyabia?

Which implications do the rise of the conflict regarding Cuyabia's land have on the village and the forest project?

The structure of the thesis

This introduction chapter gives a background for my observations and places the research in context. I give a short introduction to Paraguay and the history of land tenure in the country. Further, I introduce the NGO Alter Vida, the forest project, and the village Cuyabia. Finally, I depict the background for Alter Vida's perception of the villagers of Cuyabia as "the forest people."

In chapter II I discuss the methodology employed throughout the research process, and some empirical implications, before I introduce the theoretical perspectives I have utilized in the analysis of my empirical findings.

In chapter III I introduce Cuyabia by describing a regular day in the village. Throughout the day, I also introduce the background of the village, their surroundings, the neighbouring ranches and the Alter Vida. This chapter constitutes the basis for the chapters to come.

Chapter IV depicts how Alter Vida bases the *plan de manejo forestal* project on an image they have of the villagers in Cuyabia as "the forest people." Both Alter Vida and the ranchers cling to produce stereotypes of the villagers. I will discuss how these productions affect Cuyabia, and how the produced stereotypes differ from the reality of the villagers.

In chapter V, I illustrate that the Alter Vida representatives and the villagers in Cuyabia have different concepts of time. I argue that the villager's past as hunters and gatherers affect their work habits, which do not align the *plan de manejo forestal* project. Furthermore, I argue that the view the villagers have about the future affects the way the villagers act in the present. Their view of the future differs from Alter Vida's perception of the future, which results in different expectations of the forest project.

In chapter VI, I depict a conflict that emerged towards the end of my fieldwork regarding the land of Cuyabia. The conflict illustrates the difficult land situation in Paraguay, and I claim that the history of land tenure in Paraguay must be taken into consideration to understand how Cuyabia ended up in this situation in the first place.

In the concluding chapter I sum up, and give some concluding remarks.

Paraguay

Paraguay is "an island surrounded by land," bordering with Argentina, Brazil and Bolivia. The country has 6 454 000 inhabitants, of whom 43% live in rural areas, which makes Paraguay the most rural country in Latin America (Hetherington 2011). In pre-colonial times, many indigenous groups with diverse languages lived on the land that is now Paraguay. Today, Paraguay has the most ethnically homogenous population in Latin America (Sondrol 1997: 109; see also Næsse 2009: 15). The indigenous population constitutes 1.7% of the total population, and is divided into 20 indigenous groups. A wide gap exists between Paraguay's tiny upper class and its vast poor population (Documento Nacional 2011; Næsse 2009). World Bank data from 2010 sites that 10% of the richest population in Paraguay hold 41.1% of the total country income, while 3.3% is held by the 20% poorest. In 2010, 34.7% of the Paraguayan population was estimated to live in poverty (World Bank Human Development Indicators 2010).

Paraguay consists of two different regions, divided by Río Paraguay. The two regions differ clearly, both demographically and climatically. Most of the population lives in the eastern region of the country, the Oriental region. The Oriental region is humid; the forest is tropical and the soil fertile. The Occidental region, better known as the Chaco, stretches west from the Río Paraguay to the border with Bolivia and is part of the Gran Chaco of South America. Even though the Chaco region covers 61% of Paraguay's total land area, it only houses 2% of the country's population (Documento Nacional 2011: 7). Here, the climate is dry, almost deserted and the soil is not very productive. As Cuyabia is located in the Chaco, my main focus will be on this region throughout the thesis. Chaco is the more cultural diverse of the two regions. The Plattdeutch[8] speaking Mennonites, who originate from Canada and the former Soviet Union, owns large areas of land in the region. Chaco also hosts wealthy cattle ranchers from Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and some European countries, Paraguayans that work at the cattle ranches and indigenous people divided between 13 different indigenous groups, representing five different linguistic families. The Oriental region is the most economically productive region, producing soy, beef and cotton. The Chaco belongs to a Peripheral region of the world system, and was almost absent from the Paraguayan society until the Chaco war with Bolivia (1932-35), and has until recently, and still partly remains unimportant to the majority of the Paraguayans. In the twenty-first century, however, the Chaco has become an important beef producer, and its role is in the process of being redefined in the national society (Documento Nacional 2011: 6-7; Hetherington 2011; see also Skjerping 2011: 18).

Land tenure in Paraguay

93% of the land in Paraguay is private property, and as much as 75% of the land titles in the Chaco region are calculated to be legally incorrect (SINASIP 2009: 73). A small group of wealthy elite owns most of the privately owned land in Paraguay. According to the World Bank, the inequality on possession of land in Paraguay is evident, and has become the most important cause of socio-rural concern, likewise and impediment to poverty reduction (Sasiain & Pozzo 2008: 15-24). As I will depict throughout this thesis, the land tenure situation in Paraguay has influenced the life in the village Cuyabia. To understand

[8] Plattdeutch is a German dialect.

the situation of land tenure in Paraguay, it is necessary to have a look at the history of land tenure in the country. Hence, I will give a short introduction to the history of land tenure politics in the country.

After the war against the Triple Alliance (1865-1870), Paraguay had lost large areas of its land and a great part of its population. The government started to distribute large extensions of state owned land to private owners with the aim of attracting people and capital to repopulate the country. Thereby, the elite that had lost its land after the country's independence in 1811 regained its land and power in the national politics (Documento Nacional 2011; Hetherington 2009: 225-232; Sasian & Pozzo 2008: 33-34; Stunnenberg 1993: 10).

Land was sold in large portions in the Oriental region, while the Chaco remained unimportant to the national economy as it was seen as an unproductive dessert. Consequently, the Mennonites were welcomed with open arms by the Paraguayan government when they arrived in the Chaco from Canada and the former Soviet Union in the 1920s. The Mennonites' strict ideology had caused conflicts between them and the authorities in the countries in which they had lived before. In Paraguay however, the Mennonites were, as a strongly religious group, given the freedom to practice their religion, to educate in their own language, exempt from military service and from tax liability during their first ten years in the country. The Mennonites started to cultivate large areas of forestland, and today they are important producers of meat and dairy products in Paraguay. Until the Mennonites arrived, the indigenous groups in the Chaco region were not affected by the larger Paraguayan society (Stunnenberg 1993: 182-3). Before Stroessner's coup in 1954, property law was primarily directed towards the elite who owned large extensions of land. The elite saw the land as investments and many were not interested in turning the soil productive (Hetherington 2008: 57-58).

The Stroessner dictatorship

From 1947 until 2008, the conservative Colorado Party governed in Paraguay. General Alfredo Stroessner came to power in the coup of 1954. For 35 years Stroessner governed the country. He changed the Colorado Party from being based on a small elite,

to a big populist movement (Hetherington 2009; 2011). Opponents of the regime were oppressed by the military, and many were tortured or disappeared during the dictatorship. Despite the violence and the repression, Stroessner and his Colorado Party became very popular. Much of the reason to the popularity was the land reform that was introduced in 1963. In theory, the land reform claimed to secure a fair distribution of land to the peasant population. In practice, the land during the Stroessner dictatorship became a great source of corruption, and was used as an exchange tool to gain political favours. A great amount of land was also granted to Stroessner's political allies, friends and relatives. Thereby, the land was distributed to a few wealthy people that were not supposed to benefit from the reform. As the indigenous peoples were not taken into consideration, also their land was distributed by the land reform (Documento Nacional 2011; Hetherington 2009; Sasian & Pozzo 2008). When all land was distributed in the Oriental region, the Stroessner dictatorship began dividing-up the land in the Chaco. Hence, the cattle ranches expanded throughout the region, and onto the ancestral land of the Ayoreo (IWGIA 2010). More than 8.5 million hectares were distributed in the Chaco region during the 60 years the Colorado Party was in power (Sasian & Pozzo 2008). Still, the unfair distribution of land continued in the democratic period, while the *Partido Colorado* continued to govern the country until Fernando Lugo, representing the centre-left alliance, Patriotic Alliance for Change (APC), was elected president in 2008 (Hetherington 2011; see also Skjerping 2011).

Causes of deforestation

Paraguay's economy is to a large extent based on agriculture. The government's development model has emphasized agricultural production since the 1960s, and, as in other Latin American countries, promoted the replacement of ecosystems and forests in favour of mechanical agriculture and cattle ranching. Reduced knowledge of, and information about the value of the forest led to the government's view of the forest to be seen as non-productive. Thereby, the forest was seen as an alternative for agricultural land (Documento Nacional 2011; Hetherington 2008). With the land reform, peasants and cotton cultivators settled a third of the cultivable land in the Oriental region, which at the time was covered by forest. Distribution of land and agricultural expansion led to reduced productivity and weakening of the soil, and has thereby forced the peasant

population to move, and to settle in a place that would later be taken over by wealthier farmers and allies of Stroessner. In Latin American countries, deforestation has also been a way to claim and obtain legal land title. Towards the end of the 1980s, peasants occupied private properties to reclaim back their right to land. In the beginning of the 1990s the occupations increased, which resulted in the elite starting to deforest their land to prove their rights to the property. They demanded the support and presence of the state, and claimed their sovereignty over the peasant- and indigenous population. The agricultural politics has also forced the indigenous people to transform their forest to agricultural land. These incidents have led to extensive changes in the Paraguayan forest areas over the last few decades. In the Oriental region the forest has been reduced by 6.7 million hectares since the 1940s. In the Chaco region, where 1.15 million hectares of land has been deforested since the 1990s, the deforestation began later than in the Oriental region, and the deforestation is increasing due to the expansion of cattle ranching (Angelsen 2009; Documento Nacional 2011: 9-11; Hetherington 2008; Nygren 2000). Paraguay has not yet been able to cope with the deforestation rate, as has been the case of its neighbour Brazil. Paraguay has one of the highest deforestation rates in the region, which makes it vulnerable to impacts from climate change (Documento Nacional 2011).

Alter Vida

Alter Vida is a non-profit, non-governmental organization whose purpose is to promote on environmental themes in hopes of achieving sustainable development. Alter Vida was founded by a group of engineers and architects in 1985, who started to work with agricultural ecology, promoting agriculture without agrochemicals (Alter Vida 2011a). Alter Vida's office is located in the capital Asunción, and today the NGO performs its activities in five different arenas: agricultural ecology, biodiversity, women and environment, sustainable rural development and health and environment. The time I spent with Alter Vida was in the biodiversity section, where eight employees work. The biodiversity programme, with its eight employees, aims to preserve and conserve the ecological diversity, and the existing and potential protected wild areas, and is

responsible for the *plan de manejo forestal* project[9] in the community Cuyabia. Alter Vida characterizes itself as a socio-environmental NGO, which means that they care as much about the inhabitants of the environment as they do about the environment itself. Therefore, and as I will outline throughout this thesis, it is important for Alter Vida to include the indigenous population in the whole process of decision-making, which they stress in the forest project they are implementing in Cuyabia. Alter Vida is also interested in strengthening the position of the women in the society, by supporting equal opportunities between women and men. Hence, many of the employees are women, and some of them have a lot of responsibilities in the organisation. Alter Vida recently started to work with Cuyabia. On my first trip to Cuyabia, the villagers had not yet agreed to participate in the forest project. At a meeting with Alter Vida on my second trip to Cuyabia, the villagers accepted the project. During my stay in Cuyabia I got the impression that the villagers became more comfortable with the Alter Vida representatives as they visited Cuyabia more regularly. Thus, they also got to know each other better. Alter Vida visited Cuyabia roughly once a month during my stay in the village.

Until a few years ago, Alter Vida worked exclusively in the Oriental region, and mainly with peasant communities. As the environmental focus has shifted towards saving the forest, they have also started to work in the Chaco region, where there are still forests left. The Biodiversity section now focuses exclusively on the indigenous population, and forestry, and is not involved in peasant communities. This is in alignment with the environmental conservation trend that began in the 1980s, which repositioned its focus away from strict preservation in favour of sustainable development. As a result of this paradigm shift, indigenous populations were seen as natural conservationists, and environmental NGOs and indigenous rights movements saw the benefits of collaborating (Conklin and Graham 1995). These global changes came later to Argentina and Paraguay than other places in the world (Ferrero 2012).

As Lewis point out, projects within an organization are often ambiguous, and often have different significations to different people. He emphasizes further that it is likely that

[9] The forest management project Alter Vida was implementing in Cuyabia. I will return to the project in the next section.

disagreements and conflicts exist within the organization. Hence, an organization cannot be considered as a uniform and predictable structure (Lewis 2003: 216). I am aware that the different depictions of representatives from Alter Vida do not represent Alter Vida as a whole. When I use the term 'Alter Vida' I refer to the organization as a whole, and not o individuals.

The "Plan de Manejo Forestal" Project

The forest project Alter Vida is implementing in Cuyabia is called *plan de manejo forestal*[10], and is described as *"A communitarian project of forests based on the traditional indigenous knowledge as a new integrated model of conservation and development in the semiarid Chaco."* The project is financed by the European Union, and will be implemented in ten different indigenous communities in the Chaco region in Paraguay. Alter Vida does not have the capacity to implement the project in ten communities, and has engaged another NGO, Yvy Porã, to be in charge of five of the communities. Since I spent most of my time on fieldwork in Cuyabia, I will focus exclusively on Alter Vida's implementation of the project in Cuyabia throughout this thesis. In the information document, elaborated by Alter Vida, it says that the general objective of the project is to assure the conservation and management of the forests and other ecosystems in the semiarid Paraguayan Chaco. The specific objective is to generate a replicable model that integrates the conservation and management of the forests and other ecosystems in the semiarid Chaco, as well as stimulate economic development for the communities involved. The projects will be based on the traditional knowledge of the indigenous communities (Alter Vida 2011b). The project thereby fits into West's term a *conservation-as-development* project, being a project that assumes "that *environmental conservation could be economic development* for rural peoples" (West 2006: xii).

Alter Vida stresses that the villagers in the community participate in the whole process of planning the *plan de manejo forestal* project, as the NGO sees the participation of the villagers as a factor and precondition for a sustainable development (Alter Vida 2011a). The idea of the project is that Alter Vida assists the villagers in Cuyabia in elaborating a

[10] A *Plan de manejo forestal* is a plan to use the forest in a sustainable way with the purpose to conserve the biodiversity and fragile ecosystems.

management plan, where the villagers decide what the project must include, and they mark the use of forest products on a map of the community. Then, Alter Vida prepares the project document that must be approved by INFONA (the National Forestry Institute). In addition to a sustainable use of the forest, the project aims to strengthen the organization of the community and support the process of obtaining a land title. As Cuyabia is not in possession of a land title, this seemed to be an important factor for participating in the project. A land title is required to have a forest project approved by INFONA, but as the project coordinator in Alter Vida told me, Alter Vida had managed to make an agreement with INFONA regarding the land titles; if some of the communities participating in the project do not have a land title, a note from INDI (the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs) that confirms that the community is in the process of receiving their land title, is sufficient to have the projects validated by INFONA. The project will last for five years, and the cost is estimated to be 7000 Euros.

The village Cuyabia

In Cuyabia life is much better than in Ebetogue. We have work close by and we don't starve. We eat rice and spaghetti every day (A Cuyabia villager).

The inhabitants in Cuyabia belong to the indigenous group Ayoreo that live in the Chaco province in Northern Paraguay and Southern Bolivia. The Ayoreo population has reached 2500 persons in Bolivia and 1800 in Paraguay. *"Ayoréode*[11]*"* signifies "people" in the Zamuco language that the Ayoreo speak. In Paraguay the Ayoreo population is situated in the province of Alto Paraguay and Boquerón. Most of the communities in Boquerón are situated around the capital of the Mennonite colony Fernheim, Filadelfia. (Riester and Weber, 1998: 537). In August 2010, 16 Ayoreo families moved to Cuyabia from Ebetogue, one of the Ayoreo villages that are situated close to Filadelfia. Therefore, Cuyabia is a relatively new village. In Ebetogue about 130 families live on 1300 hectares of land, where there is almost no forest left after years of producing charcoal to the Mennonites.

[11] *Ayoréode* is the name of the Ayoreo people in the Ayoreo language (Ardaya and Salmón 2009: 248). As the villagers in Cuyabia referred to themselves as Ayoreo, the Spanish version of the term, I will use the term Ayoreo throughout this thesis.

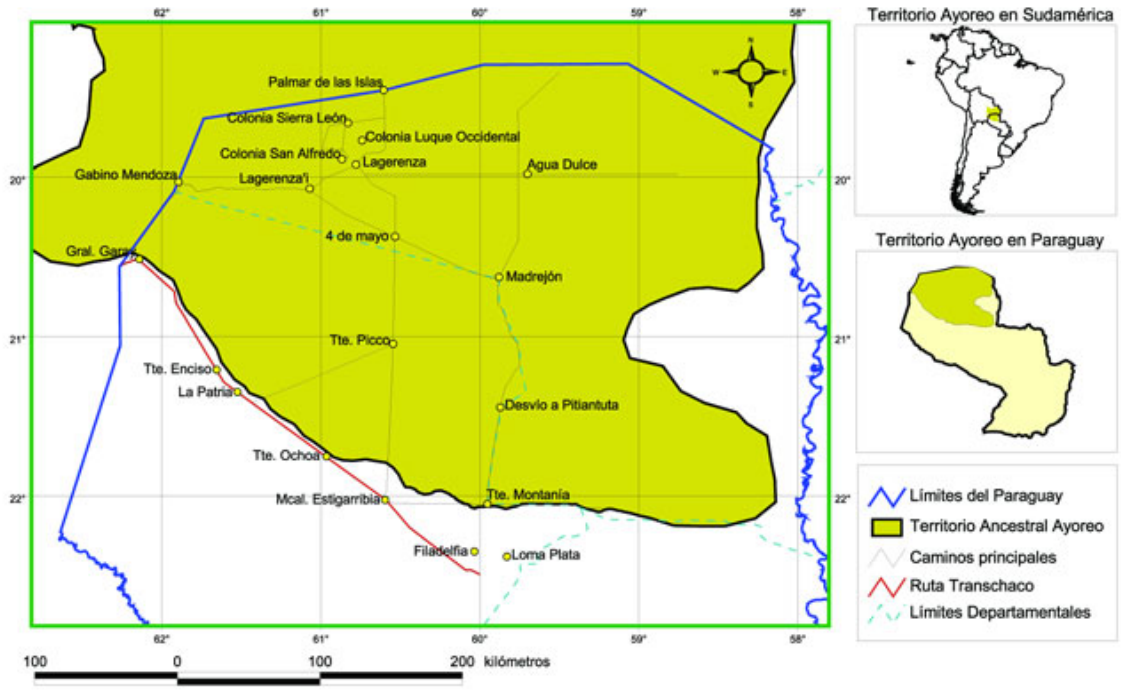
Cuyabia is located about 650 kilometres from Asunción, in the municipality of Mariscal Estigarribia in the department of Boquerón in the Chaco region, Paraguay. The village can be characterized as an "out-of-the-way place," due to its remote location 120 kilometres from the nearest town (Tsing 1993: 10; see also West 2006). Cattle ranches that have deforested, or are in the process of deforesting their property for grazing land, surround the property of the village that consists of 14 000 hectares. As I will depict throughout this thesis, the villagers work at the ranches and has a daily contact with the ranchers.

"In the maps of the white people the Ayoreo territories are still not mentioned, it is like they have erased our history, as if the Ayoreo people never have been there and as if the Ayoreo people do not continue to live there" (Mateo Sobode Chiquénoi, President of UNAP[12] in IWGIA 2010: 4).

Of all the Chaco indigenous groups, the Ayoreo is the group that resisted contact from the colonizing society the longest. The first meeting between the Ayoreo and the larger Paraguayan society was in the 1950s, and up until 1961 almost the totality of the group of Ayoreo still lived in the forest without contact with the rest of the Paraguayan society. They occupied most of the northern Paraguayan Chaco. They territory consisted of approximately 11 million hectares (IWGIA 2010: 12). The first meetings between the Ayoreo and the Paraguayans occurred because cattle ranchers and missionaries started to locate themselves and expand into the area where the Ayoreo lived. Many of the first meetings between the workers at the cattle ranches and the indigenous people ended in bloody fights (Perasso 1987: 88). In the 1950s, missionaries from different Christian traditions, started to contact the Ayoreo. Catholic missionaries contacted some of them, among whom, most live in Alto Paraguay. The North American New Tribes Mission and the Mennonites, both of Protestant faith, contacted most of the Ayoreo, including the eldest generation in Cuyabia. The missionaries placed the newly contacted Ayoreo in missionary stations to "domesticate" and evangelize them. Meanwhile, the Stroessner

[12] Unión de Nativos Ayoreo en Paraguay. The organization is supported by Rainforest Foundation Norway. For more information: http://www.iniciativa-amotocodie.org/unap/ (visited 16.04.12).

dictatorship parcelled up most of the Northern Chaco, which implied that the land of the Ayoreo territory was converted into commodities that were sold or given to Stroessner-friendly private owners, who turned the land into grazing land for cattle or resold it. The owners are Paraguayan citizens, Mennonites, foreigners, agro-, cattle and hydrocarbon investigation companies (IWGIA 2010). In these missionary stations the Ayoreo started to live in permanent settlements, in contrast to their earlier nomadic life in the forest. The missionaries introduced a Christian belief and a new form of nourishment, education and a new way to work. Many of the Ayoreo living close to the Mennonite colonies work for the Mennonites. They produce charcoal and firewood, which leads to the deforestation of their land. Many also work at cattle ranches, both for the Mennonites and other ranchers, which have made the Ayoreo dependent on the market and missionaries (von Bremen 2000; Neufeld 2003; Klassen 1999; Stunnenberg 1993: 60-69).



The original Ayoreo Territory in Paraguay[13]. (Reproduced with permission from Iniciativa Amotocodie)

[13] Source: Iniciativa Amotocodie: http://www.iniciativa-amotocodie.org/pagina-principal/portal/realidad-externa/mapas-para-localizar/ (Accessed 18.05.12)

The land of Cuyabia was bought by INDI (The National Institute of Indigenous Affairs) in 1983 with the purpose of giving it back to the indigenous population. In 1981, the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs (INDI) was enacted by *Ley 904 Estatuto de las comunidades Indígenas*. The 904/81 act asserts that the indigenous communities should be in possession of land that gives them a "life in dignity and economic independence," and estimates 100 hectares for each family living in the community in the Chaco (INDI 1985: 3). INDI was created mainly to secure the land of the indigenous population, but still they experienced forced displacements and were left out from the economic and social development of the country (Documento Nacional 2011). Two different ethnic groups, the Guaraní Ñandeva and the Ayoreo, both claimed that the land was part of their ancestral territory. In 2008, a leader of the Guaraní Ñandeva recognized that the land belonged to the Ayoreo, and the two groups signed an agreement. A project called Regularization of Indigenous Land (Regularización de Tierras Indígenas – RTI) supported the resettlement of Cuyabia onto their ancestral land. The project was initiated by INDI with the objective of regularizing indigenous land and to begin the process of giving them legal recognition. Before the villagers moved to Cuyabia in 2010, it turned out that the land of Cuyabia that originally consisted of 25 000 hectares, only had 14 000 hectares left. The residual 11 000 hectares have presumably been sold as a consequence of corruption (abc 2010c). The Alter Vida representatives claimed that the most probable explanation to the loss of land was that INDI, as no one occupied the land, divided-up the land to put it up for sale, which is against the UNDRIP law of international indigenous rights (United Nations 2008). The possibility of losing all their land was the main reason why the families decided to move to Cuyabia, several of my informants told me. Now, they are at risk of losing more of their land to cattle ranchers. In chapter VI I will depict a conflict regarding Cuyabia's land that emerged towards the end of my fieldwork.

Cuyabia's eldest generation was born when the Ayoreo group still lived as hunters and gatherers in the forest. Woodburn (1982: 432) defines hunting and gathering societies as "*societies in which people obtain their food from wild products by hunting wild animals, by fishing and by gathering wild roots, fruits and the honey of wild bees".* He further classifies hunting and gathering societies into two major categories, those with

immediate-return systems and those with delayed-return systems. In immediate-return systems, people obtain a direct and immediate return from their labour. They go out hunting or gathering and eat the food obtained the same day or casually over the days that follow. Food is neither elaborately processed nor stored (Woodburn 1982: 432). Delayed-return societies, in contrast, cultivate food and receive the return of their work over time (Woodburn 1982, see also Howell 2011, von Bremen 2000). The life of the Ayoreo was based on an immediate-return economy until the contact with the missionaries towards the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s (von Bremen 2000). As they were placed in missionary stations located close to the Mennonite colonies in the 1960s, they were introduced to wage labour, and began to work for the Mennonites and other ranch owners. Except from the oldest generation in the community, the villagers in Cuyabia were born and raised in communities surrounding the Mennonite colonies. In Ebetogue, where they lived before they moved to Cuyabia, they produced charcoal that was sold to the Mennonite colonies, and worked at cattle ranches in the area. Their previous life in Ebetogue was a much-conversed topic among the villagers in Cuyabia. They told me that life in Ebetogue was hard, because they had not much work, there was not much forest left to produce charcoal, and the deforestation in the area had led to the absence of wild animals. Hence, for most of the villagers, the movement to the land of Cuyabia was not as coming home to the forest. Most of them have lived their life without being dependent on forest products to survive. Several of the villagers have lung problems after producing charcoal for years for the Mennonites.

The Ayoreo – the Forest People?

The villagers refer to themselves as Ayoreo, and thereby draw a distinction between themselves and other indigenous groups, the Mennonites and the Paraguayans. This thesis is not a study of the Ayoreo as a group, but of the village Cuyabia, and its relation to the surroundings and the forest project. Therefore, I use the term villagers when I refer to my informants, and not the term they use when they refer to themselves; Ayoreo. I am aware that the village do not represent the Ayoreo population as a group, and what I have observed in Cuyabia might not be transferable to other Ayoreo villages.

When I refer to the history, however, I refer to the literature written on the Ayoreo as a group, and not particularly to the villagers in Cuyabia.

When I refer to Cuyabia, I use both the term 'village' and the term 'community' throughout this thesis. I am aware that the term 'community' has been a debated term both within anthropology and regarding forest management projects (see e.g. Dove 2006). Hence, I wish to emphasize that in this thesis I utilize both of the terms 'community' and 'village' to refer to the families in Cuyabia and the place where they live. Apart from noting this, I will not focus more on the meaning of these terms throughout the thesis.

In Paraguay, and particularly among the local authorities and the NGOs that work with the Ayoreo population, there exist an imagination of the Ayoreo as "the forest people." I suggest that this image is grounded on several factors; the late contact the Ayoreo had with the larger Paraguayan society, literature about the Ayoreo, representation in the media and the fact that a group of Ayoreo still live in total isolation from the outside world.[14]

The bookshelves at Alter Vida's office in Asunción are filled with books on topics such as plants and animals in Paraguay, biodiversity, land rights, environmental rights, and ethnographic accounts of the indigenous population of Paraguay. Anthropologists and other writers (Fischermann 1998, Perasso 1987, Riester & Weber 1998, Zanardini & Biedermann 2006) depict the Ayoreo as if all of them still maintain their traditional lifestyle as hunters and gatherers in the forest, which is the case of only the group that still lives in isolation. Also, the media represented the resettlement in Cuyabia as the inhabitants desire to move back to the ancestral land to reintroduce a more traditional Ayoreo lifestyle, nourished by wild animals and other forest products (abc 2010a). I suggest that the ethnographic texts and the media contribute to construct the image the

[14] The group of Ayoreo is the only indigenous group in South America outside of the Amazon that still lives completely isolated from the outside world. Iniciativa Amotocodie, a NGO located in Filadelfia in the Paraguayan Chaco, work to secure the land where the non-contacted Ayoreo group lives. Iniciativa Amotocodie is supported by Rainforest Foundation Norway. For more information: http://www.iniciativa-amotocodie.org/ (visited 18.03.12).

NGO representatives have of the villagers in Cuyabia as the forest people (Brosius 1999). These factors, in addition to the fact that the Ayoreo was one of the last contacted indigenous groups in Paraguay, and that one group of Ayoreo still live un-contacted in the Chaco region, contribute to a generalized image of the Ayoreo as "the forest people." I suggest that Alter Vida's view of the villagers in Cuyabia is affected by the generalized image of the Ayoreo as the forest people that is prevalent in Paraguay. I claim that the Ayoreo should not be generalized. Hence, I emphasize that this thesis refers to the village Cuyabia, and not the Ayoreo as a group.

Indigenous legislation and its importance to the forest project

The legislation in Paraguay separates the indigenous people as cultural distinct from the rest of the Paraguayan population. A new Constitution was introduced in 1992 replacing the 1967 Constitution from the Stroessner era. The 1992 Constitution, for the first time in Paraguay, recognized the existence of indigenous communities. It also recognized the indigenous population as culturally distinct, and they were given the rights to preserve their own socio-political systems. Also, as article 64 of the Paraguayan Constitution of 1992 states, the indigenous communities have the right to own *"land enough, in size and quality, to assure the preservation and development of their idiosyncratic (…) way of life."* (Blaser 2004: 55; CNP 1992; Duckworth 2011; Lambert 1997). I suggest that the legislation may affect the way Alter Vida presents its *plan de manejo forestal* project. As the way of life of the indigenous community is a criterion that is taken into account when calculating if the community represents the necessary criterions for obtaining the amount of land that the state is obliged to give them, some NGOs emphasizes these characteristics to get the necessary financial support (Blaser 2004: 54-55). Alter Vida can be characterized as what Blaser (2004) names a radical NGO that perceives the indigenous people as "essentially different and that this difference is embodied in traits of hunter-gatherer societies such as living in harmony with nature, equality, solidarity and the like" (Blaser 2004: 60). The radicalists work to improve the land situation of the indigenous people, to live in the forest in a sustainable way (Blaser 2004). From what I have outlined, I emphasize that the image Alter Vida has of the villagers in Cuyabia builds on several factors; a general view in Paraguay of the Ayoreo as the forest people and political reasons.

Paraguay has voted for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and has ratified the ILO 169 Convention that recognizes the rights of ownership and possession of indigenous peoples (Fogel 2006: 167; Prieto 2009: 69; see also Skerping 2011). The ILO 169 Convention recognizes the distinction between land and territory. The territory includes the total habitat of the indigenous peoples; land, water, air, environment, sacred places and other places of historical importance and subterranean resources (Prieto 2009: 69-70.). As the *plan de manejo forestal* project focuses on the land and not the territory, the land will be my focus throughout this thesis.

Chapter II: Methodology

I conducted my fieldwork in Paraguay from the beginning of January to the end of July 2011. I spent approximately two months with the NGO Alter Vida and almost five months in the community Cuyabia. I rounded of the fieldwork with two weeks at Alter Vida's office in Asunción.

The first three weeks, I took an introduction course in Guaraní, which is an official language in Paraguay in addition to Spanish. While studying Guaraní, I contacted Alter Vida who kindly offered to help me find a community where I could conduct my fieldwork and provided me with the information I needed. I spent the days with Alter Vida at the office gathering information about Alter Vida's projects and the environmental situation in Paraguay, first in combination with the Guaraní course, thereafter fulltime. I also participated in meetings and went on fieldtrips with the employees. The many hours I spent on the road with the employees were good opportunities for informal conversations. During the time I spent in Asunción, I read national newspapers and national law regarding nature conservation, land rights and indigenous rights.

Before I arrived Paraguay I was planning to conduct my fieldwork in a peasant community, where I wanted to study the implementation of a REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) project. REDD is a global initiative with the aim to stop deforestation[15]. In November 2010 Paraguay was granted 4.7 million dollars from the UN-REDD initiative, for the implementation of a national REDD project to be carried out over a three-year period (abc 2010b). When I arrived in Paraguay, I found that the three institutions that constitute the technical REDD team in the country; SEAM (the Secretariat of the Environment), INFONA (the National Forestry Institute) and FAPI (the Federation for the Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples), had still not agreed upon a national strategic plan for the implementation of REDD, and

[15] For more information about REDD see: Angelsen et al. (2009); Cotula and Mayers (2009); Dooley et al. (2008); Howell (forthcoming).

they did not reach an agreement until July 2011, when I was about to end my fieldwork. Thus, I decided to focus on the *plan de manejo forestal* project that Alter Vida was implementing in Cuyabia. To avoid any confusion, however, I wish to emphasize that Alter Vida's *plan de manejo forestal* project is not a REDD project, and that REDD will not be under further consideration throughout this thesis.

When I was planning my fieldwork, I noted that much of the focus regarding forest conservation and forest rights are directed towards the indigenous population. Many local communities located in forested areas are not characterized as indigenous peoples. Many of these communities depend on the forest in the same way as the indigenous population, but are not given the same attention in forest conservation projects. In Paraguay, about two millions of the population is characterized as peasantry, while only 100 000 are indigenous peoples (Documento Nacional 2011). Therefore, before I went to Paraguay, I was planning to conduct my fieldwork in a peasant community. On my first trip to Cuyabia I was still in search of a peasant community to do my fieldwork, and went on the trip to get to know the Alter Vida representatives and more about the environmental situation in Paraguay. However, I was fascinated by Cuyabia's situation; the cattle ranches surrounding their land, the resettlement on their ancestors' territory and their supposedly desire to live in the forest in a sustainable way. Once back at Alter Vida's office in Asunción; I started to read about their situation and their background. At the same time, I also had conversations with several of the Alter Vida employees about the project and the village. In February, on my second trip to Cuyabia, I asked the villagers for permission to conduct my fieldwork there. On my third visit I ended up staying, while the representatives from Alter Vida travelled back to Asunción.

When I asked for permission to conduct my fieldwork in Cuyabia during my second visit to the community, I presented my project to the villagers. I introduced myself as a student from Norway who wanted to live in the village until July, participate in their daily activities and study their relation to the forest and the *plan de manejo forestal* project. I further explained that I would write a thesis on the subject after returning to Norway. They agreed to let me stay in the village. Nevertheless, they did not seem to understand what my research was about or that I wanted to participate in their daily activities.

Visiting the village a few times before I stayed there for an extended period of time by myself was a good way to ease the transition into their lives, without being too intrusive. At the same time I gave my informants the impression of being a representative from Alter Vida, which probably affected the way they looked at me. Since I visited Cuyabia with the Alter Vida representatives on two occasions before I stayed in the village, the villagers in the beginning expressed that they thought I was a representative from Alter Vida. I continually tried to stress that I was a student doing a research independent from Alter Vida, which they after a while seemed to accept.

First, I was not included in their daily activities, and spent much of my time playing with the children, who seemed to be curious and to accept me immediately. Most of the outsiders visiting the village, either came to include the village in a project, as Alter Vida and local government officials, or they came to offer them work, as the ranchers. They all came to the village, presented their intentions and then left, without interacting much with the villagers. There I was, a *cojñone*[16] who wanted to live with them and do exactly what they did, something that must have seemed strange to them. Inspired by Hutchinson (1997), I found humour as a useful tool to become accepted by the villagers. I think that by laughing with the villagers about my mistakes and at times clumsy behaviour, helped "to break the ice" and to make the villagers accept me (Hutchinson 1997: 47).

I regularly offered to help out in the daily activities, and after a few days, they seemed to accept my presence, and gradually allowed me to take part of the everyday life in the village. As my main method of research was participative observation, I tried to participate in all activities: gather watermelons and pumpkins from the communitarian field, work at the ranches and participate in gatherings and encounters with the ranchers and at meetings with Alter Vida. I was not allowed to participate in hunting and the making of posts, which were male activities. Most of my time, however, was spent in

[16] *Cojñone* originally referred to people that are not Ayoreo. Today, *cojñone* refers mainly to white people, or non-indigenous in the Ayoreo language.

front of the bonfire or by the volleyball field, drinking *tereré*[17] and chatting with the villagers or playing with the children. The first weeks of my stay in Cuyabia, I lived in a tent, located not far from the leader Unine's house. When the cold winter nights arrived, a family, a young couple and their three children, invited me to live with them in their house. During my stay in Cuyabia, I tried to live as the villagers did, and eat what they ate. I think the strength of participative observation is the possibility to spend time with the informants over a longer period of time. Hence, as Smedal (2001) emphasizes, by spending time in the field, while incidents occur and have consequences, we obtain a stronger background for our observations (Smedal 2001: 132). I suggest that my interpretation of life in Cuyabia may differ from Alter Vida's interpretation, as they did not have the possibility to stay in the village for longer amounts of time.

Towards the end of my stay, I conducted semi-structured interviews with all the households in the village. However, I experienced that the information I gathered through informal conversations was more informative than the interviews, because the villagers gave more thoughtful descriptions in a situation tied to a topic of the conversation, at the same time as the context was more relaxed.

I had my notebook with me at all times, and took notes in front of my informants. I wrote down what was said in conversations as soon as possible. When I use quotations throughout this thesis, it is with the aim to be as close to what my informants actually said as possible. As I tried to learn words and phrases in the Ayoreo language, I also used the notebook to write a glossary. Although I did not learn much of the language, it was a good way to get to know the villagers and show my interest to learn from them. During the fieldwork I wrote field notes everyday, which in the writing process has helped me to pick out the most applicable empirical examples for the topic of this thesis.

As Cuyabia is a small village, housing only 16 families, I had the time to converse with everyone in the village. I tried to "perfect the art of conversation" by conversing with as many in the village as possible (Hutchinson 1997: 45). I had Stewart's criteria on

[17] *Tereré* is the cold version of the more familiar *mate* – a herbal tea that is drunk in Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay and some parts of Brazil. The *tereré/mate* is drunk from a gourd with a straw, usually at social gatherings. One person is in charge of filling the gourd with water and handing it out to the others.

veracity in mind, and was trying to "search for disconfirming observations" (Stewart 1998: 21-22). A limitation of my research, however, is that I was not able to understand the conversations in Ayoreo between the villagers. During social gatherings and in conversations with villagers that did not speak Spanish, I sought translation from the ones that spoke Spanish. One of the villagers also helped me to translate while conducting the interviews. It was easier for me to communicate with the ones that spoke Spanish, which excludes the elder generation that only speak Ayoreo. I might have missed out on important topics, due to my lack of language skills in Ayoreo. I also have to take into consideration that the interpreters may have impacted on what they translated.

At the beginning of my fieldwork in Cuyabia, I did not manage to have fruitful conversations with the women. When I tried to initiate a conversation, they, if they answered at all, answered in Ayoreo or turned towards their husband for a translation to Spanish, even though many of the women speak Spanish quite well. After a while, I managed to get to know the women better. I spent my time in the village with both men and women, usually both together, as the couples in the village do not spend much time apart from each other. Although I participated more in the female activities, this thesis mainly builds on conversations with men. In conversations with the villagers, the women did not show much interest in my research topic, but preferred talking about other subjects, as the ranchers, music and mobile phones. As I did not want to impose my research topic on the villagers, I had conversations with them regarding many different topics. In that way, I was able to get a better impression of their daily concerns and interests, which may be the reason why I did not have many conversations with women regarding the forest use and Alter Vida's project. Still, I experienced the forest project to play a significant role in everyday life in Cuyabia. As I understood that the ranchers also affected the life in the village, my research topics emerged. Throughout this thesis, I will not go further into the topic of gender relations, other than to point out the fact that both women and men take part in decision-making, and that many of the work activities are gender specific.

First, I stayed in the background when the ranchers visited the village, as I thought that they did not have anything to do with my research regarding the *plan de manejo forestal*

project and the villagers' use of the forest. It did not take me long, however, to understand that the ranchers played a central part in the villagers' everyday life, and affected their use of the forest. Hence, I directed more attention towards the ranchers, and observed the interaction between the ranchers and the villagers. Due to the lack of transportation in Cuyabia, both the villagers and I depended on the ranchers to get us back and forth from the community and the nearest town, Mariscal Estigarribia, as the Alter Vida representatives did not visit the community more than roughly once a month. On the rides to Mariscal Estigarribia I had the opportunity to converse with the ranch administrators. Hence, all the information I have about the ranches is from conversations with the administrators back and forth from Mariscal Estigarribia. During my stay in Cuyabia, I saw these trips as good opportunities to get an impression of the ranchers and the relation they have to the villagers.

The four villagers that I characterize as my key informants are men. All of my four key informants spoke Spanish. I am aware that they do not represent the community as a whole. Due to the small populace of villagers living in the community I had the opportunity to talk to everyone, and by all means it was easier for me to communicate with the ones that spoke Spanish. Maybe I would have had a different view if I had spent time with other people, and the ones that only spoke Ayoreo.

The knowledge generated in an anthropological research is the product of an inter-subjective relation between the ethnographer and the field (Wikan 1996: 185). My presence in the community may have affected the way the villagers acted, and influenced my material. Also, the empirical material throughout this thesis is a result of the interaction between my informants and me. Hence, I include myself in the empirical accounts throughout this thesis. As I will argue that the behaviour of my informants is affected by their past and their view of the future, I am aware that also my perceptions are affected by my past and my view of the future, which consequently affect this study.

Ethical implications

I was open about my role as a student in anthropology and the topic of my research, both during the time I spent with Alter Vida, and in Cuyabia. I tried not to impose my

own thoughts and opinions upon my informants, at the same time I wanted to be honest. Therefore, when they asked me about my opinion, I always answered honestly.

The writing process of this thesis at times has been challenging. After living in the village Cuyabia for several months, I see the villagers as my friends. Although I had been open about my study and research topic, I am not sure if they understood what I was going to write about in my thesis. When I came back to Norway and began to write, it felt uncomfortable to analyse the behaviour of the villagers. Throughout the writing process, also the depiction of Alter Vida has been demanding. During my stay in Paraguay, the Alter Vida representatives helped me and provided me with the information I needed, and they became my friends. By depicting Alter Vida's interaction with Cuyabia, I first felt that I put both the organisation Alter Vida and its employees in a bad light. Nevertheless, reading Stewart (1998: 59), who claims that the aim of anthropological research is to generate potentially transferable insights, helped me to understand that the depiction of my observations in the field is not a critique of my informants. Rather, by depicting my observations I hope my research will achieve veracity and transferable insights.

Analytical Perspectives

In the search for an applicable analytical framework for this thesis, I have chosen different theoretical perspectives to illuminate my empirical findings. To depict the present situation of the villagers in Cuyabia throughout this thesis, I find both a historical and a futuristic perspective useful. The encounters between the villagers, the NGO Alter Vida and the ranchers, I try to illuminate by utilizing theories of social interface and middle ground. To explain the images Alter Vida and the ranches produce of the villagers, I draw on theories of stereotyping and imaginations of "the other."

A Historical and a Futuristic Perspective

Eric Wolf (1982), Sydney Mintz (1986) and Andrew Vayda (1996), among others, argue that anthropology needs to study the present situation by tracking it backwards in time. "Only in this way could we come to comprehend the forces that impel societies and

cultures here and now" (Wolf 1982: XV). With a historical perspective, I seek to illustrate how the history of land tenure politics in Paraguay, the history of the Ayoreo population, and the villagers' background as hunters and gatherers affect the villagers' actions and the present situation of Cuyabia.

At the same time as the historical features have an impact on the life in Cuyabia, the ideas and perceptions the villagers have about the future affect the way they act in the present (Persoon and Perez 2008). Persoon and Perez (2008) take Vayda's idea about studying and explaining events and their effects by tracking them backward in time (Vayda 1996: 16), and apply it in a similar matter with respect to the future; they start with an image of the future, and work backwards in time to the present. They claim that the way the people live in the present can be interpreted by the image or perception the people have of the future (Persoon and Perez 2008: 295-296). Throughout this thesis I find a futuristic perspective useful to explain the different expectations the villagers of Cuyabia and the Alter Vida representatives have from the forest project. Environmental projects, as Alter Vida's *plan de manejo forestal* project, and concepts such as sustainability and conservation, are future-oriented, often in a long-term perspective (Nagpal and Foltz 1995 in Persoon and Perez 2008). With a futuristic perspective I wish to emphasize that the villagers in Cuyabia do not necessarily have the same long-term perspective as Alter Vida, which I suggest is reflected in their actions in the present. Hence, what people do in the present is affected by their images of the future (Persoon and Perez 2008).

'Approaching the future could improve our understanding of the present, especially when coupled with an understanding of the historical past" (Persoon and Perez 2008: 288). This is exactly what I aim to do throughout this thesis; by focusing on both the past and ideas and images of the future, I aim to present the ideas, perceptions and actions of the villagers in Cuyabia, and I try to illustrate how the villagers' view differs from the Alter Vida representatives' expectations to the forest project.

Social Interface

Throughout the thesis, I depict several encounters between the villagers of Cuyabia and the Alter Vida representatives, as well as with the neighbouring ranches. I find the term

'social interface' useful in the analysis of the encounters between Cuyabia and Alter Vida, and between Cuyabia and the ranchers. Norman Long defines social interface as "a critical point of intersection or linkage between different social systems, fields or levels of social order where structural discontinuities, based upon differences of normative value and social interest, are most likely to be found" (Long 1989: 1-2). Long emphasizes that the social interface implies a face-to-face encounter between different parts that often are differentiated in terms of power, and have different interests regarding the interface (Long 1989: 2). In the encounters with Alter Vida and the ranches, I claim that Cuyabia is the part with the least power, as "power always operates in conditions of unequal relations" (Hall 1997: 261).

Assumptions and Images About the "Other"

Conklin and Graham (1995) utilize the historian Richard Whites (1991) concept "middle ground" to explain the interaction between the indigenous populations, NGOs and sympathizers from the Western world. The new politics of the eco-Indigenous middle ground is primarily a symbolic politics; based on ideas and images about the indigenous peoples as natural forest conservationists (Conklin and Graham 1995: 696). Hence, the middle grounds are based on assumptions about "the Other" and that "the Other" can contribute to achieve specific goals. "These assumptions, according to White, always involve cross-cultural misperceptions and strategic misrepresentations" (Conklin and Graham 1995: 696). I suggest that Cuyabia and Alter Vida interact in a middle ground in the implementation of the *plan de manejo forestal* project. I find the concept 'middle ground' useful in the depiction of the different expectations Alter Vida and Cuyabia have to the forest project. As Conklin and Graham (1995) point out, the middle grounds are mutually constructed, and do not fit into a simple domination – subordination relation (Conklin and Graham 1995: 695; White 1991). Hence, I suggest that, although Alter Vida bases the forest project on an image they have of the villagers in Cuyabia as the forest people, the villagers manage to participate in the project in a way that satisfy their own needs (von Bremen 2000: 282).

As already mentioned, I suggest that Alter Vida bases its *plan de manejo forestal* project on an image they have of the villagers as "the forest people." Throughout the thesis, I claim that Alter Vida and the ranches produce stereotypes of the villagers in Cuyabia. To

be stereotyped signifies to be reduced to a few essentials and to appear with a simplified characteristic (Hall 1997: 257). Stereotyping fixes boundaries symbolically, and separates "us" from "them" (Hall 1997: 258). In much of the same way as Said (1979) claims that the West has represented the Orient in a simplistic way, I suggest that Alter Vida and the ranches produce simplified images of the villages in Cuyabia (Hall 1997: 258-260; Said 1979). I try to illustrate that both Alter Vida and the ranchers produce different stereotypes of the villagers, which fit into and legitimize their interaction with Cuyabia. At the same time, I suggest that the ranches and the Alter Vida representatives produce stereotypes of each other while criticizing the other's interaction with the village.

Chapter III: Cuyabia and its surroundings

"The spirit came in the form of a raven, it brought me up in the sky and told me:

"Look at Eami[18] tonight.
You can see many bonfires glowing.
They are all bonfires of your Ayoreo village that lighten everything."

We continue to fly and the lights extinguish one after the other.

"This is the future of your people.
The forest darkens because the Ayoreo don´t live in it.
Everything turns dark."

This my grandfather sang when I was a child.
And I, Oji, remember his song.
And my people now know that my grandfather was singing the truth."

(Oji Etacore, an old man from the Ayoreo village of Ijnapui cited in IWGIA 2010: 10)

Throughout this thesis I argue that Alter Vida bases its forest project on an image they have of the villagers in Cuyabia as "the forest people." In this chapter I will depict the everyday life in Cuyabia, by drawing on excerpts from my field notes. Hence, I illustrate a regular day in the village, and throughout the day I also introduce the ranches that surround Cuyabia, and other central features of their everyday life. By depicting a regular day in Cuyabia, I aim to illustrate how the villagers interact with the neighbouring ranches and the NGO Alter Vida. Hence, rather than being analytical, this chapter sets the basis for the analytical chapters to come. Does Alter Vida's image of the villagers in Cuyabia as "the forest people" concur with the everyday life in the village?

[18] *Eami* is the name of the Ayoreo territory in the Ayoreo language.

A Day in Cuyabia

I wake up from the crocks crowing, about the same time as the sunrise. The dogs have spent virtually the entire night barking, which kept me awake most of the night. Ten dogs, two roosters and three hens are the only domestic animals in Cuyabia. The hens and roosters are owned collectively. The dogs are used for hunting, and are especially useful at discovering and catch the tatu bolita[19]. The villagers traded watermelons and pumpkins for roosters and hens from Ombu, the neighbouring ranch. They have yet to serve the villagers much; the dogs usually find the eggs before the villagers.
I get up, and walk over to Unine's family's house that is situated about 10 meters from my tent. Even though the Paraguayan autumn is just around the corner, the heat is still burdensome, and the sun is burning hot even in the morning.

The Chaco

The word *Chaco* stems from the word *chacu* that in the indigenous language Quechua means "a place for hunting", referring to its vast amount of animals. The Chaco forest is low, open and thorny, and most of the trees do not reach more than 10 metres. It is estimated that about 5000 different plant species exist in the region. The semidry Chaco forest is considered a fragile ecosystem that requires a sustainable management (Naumann & Coronel 2008:52). Many authors have called Chaco "the green hell," and after spending several months there I understand why. The temperature can reach as high as 50 C during summer, with high humidity where mosquitoes and other insects flourish. When the rain pours down during summer, the dusty ground transforms to a slippery mud, and it is impossible to get anywhere for days with a vehicle without getting stuck on the muddy roads. During winter the weather depends on the direction of the wind. If the wind comes from the south, the temperature drops, and can reach below zero degrees Celsius. With the cold wind and humid air, the low temperature in Chaco feels freezing. When the wind swaps direction and comes from the north, the temperature increases, and the muddy roads, which is characteristic during summertime, turns into dusty roads. The wind brings the dust with it on its way, which makes it almost impossible to keep one's eyes open when outside. Most of the trees in

[19] The tatu bolita is a small armadillo. Its scientific name is Tolypeutes matacus (Nauman & Coronel 2008:53).

the Chaco region have spines, and if you want to walk into the forest where there is no path it is absolutely necessary to take along a machete to forge a path and to wear trousers and long-sleeved jacket, to avoid cutting yourself on the spines.

The Leader

Unine is the leader of Cuyabia. He is in his mid forties, and at first sight he might appear as a stiff and serious character. After getting to know him, his humorous side shines through. When visitors arrive Cuyabia, Unine is usually the first person they meet. Unine is in charge of most of the activities the villagers perform at the ranches, he or one of his sons are usually the ones that go out hunting, but as Unine admits; he often comes back empty handed. Cuyabia is collectively in possession of two rifles, as hunting is a male activity. They hunt venison, wild boar, aardvarks and a type of armadillo called *tatu bolita*. The catch is distributed between all the households, and usually lasts for a day or two. Food sharing is prevalent in Cuyabia. I suggest that the food sharing dates back to their past as hunters and gatherers. Among hunter-gatherers the food sharing is by demand rather than being based on donor and recipient relations (Rival 2002: 104-105). Unine and his sons, or the other men in the community do not spend much time hunting. Usually, they bring a rifle while doing other errands on the land of the community.

Unine knows the land of Cuyabia as his well as his own pocket, and often travels around their land to control the area. He travels on his scooter to the neighbouring ranch, where he calls the local government representatives and the NGO representatives to get updated on the latest news. He is a typical leader in charge of everything in the community.

Location

Unine's family's house is located in the middle of the community, and is a common gathering point for the villagers. The houses are situated around an open area that has been turned into a volleyball field, which also works as the gathering point during the days off from work, where the whole day can be spent playing volleyball. Most of the families have their own houses, where they do not spend much time, except to sleep. All

the houses consist of one room, where the whole family sleeps, either on self-constructed beds or on mattresses on the ground.

At the time I was doing my fieldwork, the community was still not done planning and organizing the infrastructure of Cuyabia. The villagers first settled by the entrance of one of their neighbour ranches, but after a few months, they decided to move closer to the pond, about 4 kilometres from where they first settled. When I arrived Cuyabia for the first time in the end of January, the villagers were still constructing their houses; the government had donated 16 roofs with gutters to gather up to 1 000 litres of rainwater in barrels. The walls of the houses each had to be constructed independently by hand, with everything from tarpaulins to wood from the forest or mud from the ground after rainy days. At the end of March, a government project financed the construction of two wells of 20 000 and 25 000 litres in the community and installed a pump drifted on gasoline, which run about 700 metres from the pond to the wells. This investment made life easier for the inhabitants of the community, especially for the women that are usually the ones that fetch the household's water supply. There is no electricity in the village.

The Villagers

All the families living in Cuyabia are related through kinship. Four of the families are older couples and are the oldest generation in the village. Four of them are siblings. They were born when the Ayoreo group still lived as hunters and gatherers in the forest, and were still young when the missionaries contacted them for the first time. It was this generation that first expressed a desire to move back to the land of their ancestors. First, they thought Cuyabia was part of where they lived as children, one of them told me, but later they realized that they had lived north of where Cuyabia is located, close to the national park *Enciso*. She went on to say that she did not feel that it is important to live in Cuyabia anymore. From this statement I conclude that the relation the oldest generation of the villagers have to the land and the forest is important to them, that they have a feeling of belonging. From an indigenous point of view, land "carries a highly symbolic, cultural and religious meaning and is congruous to the repository of their ancestors and the origin of their tribe" (Stunnenberg 1993: 114). The younger

generations, on the other hand, were born in villages close to the Mennonite colonies, and did not express the same feeling of belonging to the forest. My informants often referred to their ancestors living in the forest, occupying large areas of the Chaco region. Still, while talking to them about moving to the land of Cuyabia, many referred to the possibility of work nearby as the main reason for living there. It was notably the eldest generation that referred to their ancestors living here before. I will return to the land issue in chapter VI.

The 16 families that lived in Cuyabia when I first arrived consist of around 60 people altogether, divided between four different generations. The families are divided into senior couples, as already mentioned, couples with already grown children that again have their own children. During my stay in the village, several families moved to Cuyabia from another Ayoreo village close to the Mennonite town Filadelfia. Some have moved there only for a relatively short period of time, others want to settle down to live there. When I left the village in July 2011 about 20 families had settled there. Among many indigenous communities in the Paraguayan Chaco there is instability in their organizational structure. *"The populations of most communities are changing rapidly because families leave and arrive continuously"* (Stunnenberg 1993: 242). The Ayoreo population is divided into 7 clans, with different endings depending if it refers to a male or a female: Chiquénoi/Chiqueñoro, Picanerai/Picanere, Etacori/Etacore, Dosapei/Dosape, Cutamorajai/Cutamiñoro, Posorajai/Posiñoro and Jnurumini/Jnurumine. Each clan originally possess a sign or symbol of recognition, which refers to a number of different qualities and phenomenon from nature and material goods (Ardaya and Salmón 2009: 41; Riester and Weber 1998: 32) Members of the same clan refer to the same origin and consider themselves as relatives. The clans are exogamous and patrilineal, but some clan rules, as the one regarding exogamy, value among the younger generations. The clan names are origins of the present-day surnames (Ardaya and Salmón 2009; Fisherman, 1998: 32). I did not spend enough time in the community to valuate the prominence of the different clan names today, but I did not get the impression that the villagers refer to their clan names more than as a surname. The oldest generation in Cuyabia belongs to the clan Chikénoi. As their children and grandchildren have married, most of the clan names are represented in the village.

A house in the village Cuyabia.

The villagers gathered around the volleyball field.

On my way over to Unine's house I see some of the children playing with a football on the volleyball field. They all have chewing gums in their mouths, and some of them are blowing big bubbles. With the lack of both a teacher and a classroom, the children in Cuyabia do not go to school. According to Unine, a school is the number one priority as the next project in the village. Until then, the children spend the days playing with each other and helping their parents in the daily activities. Some of the children started school in Ebetogue before they moved to Cuyabia. Several of my informants have told me that most of them go to school for five or six years, and usually quit to start wage labour with their parents at the ranches. The illiteracy rate in the community is high, and a few know have to write a name. Unine, the second and the third leaders, the pastor and Unine's' youngest son, however, know how to write sentences.

Religious Beliefs

The gum that the children were chewing were the day before brought by the missionaries from the North American New Tribes Mission, who live close to the Ayoreo community Campo Loro[20]. They drove the village priest back to Cuyabia from a visit in Campo Loro. This day was the only time the missionaries from Campo Loro came to visit Cuyabia during my stay, and as Unine informed me, was their first visit to the community. I was surprised by the reception the villagers gave the missionaries. When outsiders, such as government officials, ranch owners and NGO staff, visit the community, most of the inhabitants are shy, sceptical and do not say much. When the missionaries arrived everyone went to where their car stopped to welcome them. The villagers talked to them and treated them with a great respect. The missionaries speak Ayoreo. One of them told me that their family arrived Paraguay in the 1960s, and has lived outside of Campo Loro since. The missionaries stayed for about an hour before they went back to Campo Loro. They brought used clothes and food rations, included chewing gums and other sweets.

[20] Campo Loro is an Ayoreo village that is situated a few kilometres away from Ebetogue, the village the inhabitants of Cuyabia moved from in August 2010. Campo Loro was one of the first settlements where the Ayoreo were placed when they were brought out of the forest by the missionaries towards the end of the 1950s.

In conversations I had about religion with my informants in Cuyabia, they all told me that they do not practice the religion of their ancestors. When I brought up the topic they did not show any interest in talking about their ancestral beliefs. Most of the inhabitants characterized themselves as either Evangelicals or Catholics. There were no practicing shamans in the community, only the pastor that has been educated by the missionaries in Campo Loro. On Sundays the villagers usually gather outside of the pastor's house, where he reads from the bible that the missionaries have traduced to the Ayoreo language. After the missionaries left, I had a conversation with one of the villagers regarding religious beliefs. He said: *"Before, the Ayoreo believed in the religion of our ancestors, but we do not practice that religion anymore. Now we know that God exists. Now we know the truth."* Despite this statement, I suggest that, although I did not get the impression from the villagers, there is a reason to believe that the villagers have another perception of religion and nature than the larger Paraguayan society (von Bremen 2000). Nevertheless, I will not go further into this topic throughout the thesis.

Outside of Unine's house are Unine's wife Chikide, their oldest son with his wife and two of the oldest couples sitting on blankets on the ground not far from the bonfire. While not working for the cattle ranches, the villagers can spend the whole day gathered by the bonfire or around the volleyball field watching and playing volleyball. This is going to be one of those days, because the villagers are waiting for one of the ranch Los Lazos' tractors to transport them into the forest to make posts for fence making. I decide to join the group that is gathered outside of Unine's house. One of the older ladies is picking lice from her sister's hair. Her husband is in charge of handing out tereré, while the four others are picking the spicy little red "berries" from the plant they grow on, which the villagers gather and bring back to the community in big white sacks.

Gender Relations

During the Paraguayan autumn, these little red "berries" flourish on the pastureland fields that surround Cuyabia. The Ayoreo use these "berries", named *Juone* in the Ayoreo language, as seasoning. They use it with all kinds of food; rice, pasta and pumpkins. Unine has once before explained to me that the best use of the seasoning is to sprinkle it on barbequed meat. The Ayoreo ate the seasoning while still living in the forest, because

it gave them energy, Unine further explained. *"It gave them strength to go out hunting,"* he added. As I always added a generous portion of *Juone* on my rice or pasta, I was told I was going to get strong. Collecting *Juone* is basically an activity done by women, and some of the children who always come along to help. At times men participate as well, or come along with their wives to find firewood while the women collect *Juone*. Among the Ayoreo, there exists a gendered division in work activities; men hunt and do wage labour at the ranches, while women are in charge of the domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning, washing clothes and collecting different forest products and firewood. Yet, the roles are flexible, and when necessary, men and women help each other. Both women and men work at the common field, and there exists collaboration and solidarity among most couples (Ardaya and Salmón 2009: 232). I observed that husbands and wives did not spend much time apart from each other. The women often accompanied their husbands when they worked in the forest or at the ranches, and the husband often kept his wife company when she cooked or washed clothes. Husbands and wives almost always sat next to each other when the villagers gathered around the bonfire. Among the Ayoreo, the women participate as much as the men in the decision-makings (Ardaya and Salmón 2009: 201). *"Socially women are not considered inferior to men. In the Ayoreo culture exists equality between men and women, even though the cacique is a man, but the influence from women is determinant when it comes to make decisions"* (Zanardini & Biedermann 2006: 40). I noticed during my stay in Cuyabia that the men consulted with the women before they made any decisions. Whenever someone from outside the community came to visit, the men were always the ones to communicate with them. Then the women appeared shy and giggly during such visits.

Juone

When gathering *Juone,* the women bring an empty bag each that were once filled with rice and bread, and walk in the direction of the neighbouring ranch, Ombu. They walk to the border of Cuyabia's land, and where the forest cover ceases, to where the deforested fields of Ombu begin. Here they started to pick up the stems of the plant with "berries" on them, and put them in the big white bags. The women carry the big sacks on their back. Sometimes the women bring heavy firewood in handmade bags back to the community. Back in the community, it is time to remove the berries from the plant.

Gathering Juone on the grazing land from the ranch Ombu.

Juone

The berries are either red or green, depending on how ripe they are. The red ones are easier to remove than the green ones. The berries are spicy, and you should not touch your eyes after touching the berries. It usually takes more than a day to remove the *Juone* from the plant of one sack, depending on how many workers are collaborating. To remove the berries is usually an activity done by women, but the men help as well. Removing the berries is done in a social setting close to the bonfire, usually during daytime. The children participate as well, at least until they run out of patience and prefer to play football or other games instead. When the *Juone* is removed from the plant, it has to be dried in the sun for at least a week. When the *Juone* has dried, it is ready to be mortared into powder. The powder of the *Juone* is called *Jui*. The *Juone* grows from March until the drought starts around June or July. When Unine travels to Asunción, which usually is not more than a few times each year, he always brings *Juone*, he told me, and he sells it to the *cojñone*. Also when the inhabitants visit relatives in other communities they bring *Juone* and *Jui*, because it does not grow everywhere. In Ebetogue, the village the inhabitants of Cuyabia moved from, there is no *Juone* left, as several of the villagers told me.

While picking the Juone from the plant, we hear the sound of a vehicle far-off in the distance. The children immediately shout out "Pickup!" and run from the volleyball field towards the road. The entrance into the community is located by the road that goes straight through the land of Cuyabia, dividing it in two parts, which one of the cattle ranches made before anyone lived on the land of the community. The road leads to the ranch Los Lazos, and usually not more than a vehicle or two drive past the community during a day. The villagers, both children and adults, as soon as they hear the sound of a vehicle, shout out "Scooter!" or "Pickup!" or whatever it is that is passing by the village. Usually some of them run out to the road to see who it is. First, I did not understand this excitement about the vehicles was all about, but it did not take me long before I noticed the sounds of the vehicles and saw the joy of screaming it out as well. I did still not understand why they did it, but I guess it was because there was not much else going on in everyday life in the community.

This time it was one of the administrators of the ranch Los Lazos that stopped on the road outside the community. Unine walks towards the road, followed by his youngest daughter

and me. Most of the children and a couple of the younger women have already gathered around the administrator's pickup. The administrator and Unine arrange that the ranch will send a tractor early the next morning to pick up the workers from Cuyabia that are going to make posts for Los Lazos. They will stay there for four or five days until the tractor comes back and pick up them and the posts they have made, and bring the workers back to the community. I will get back to the work with posts in chapter IV. Then, the administrator drives back in the direction of Los Lazos with a cloud of dust billowing up behind his pickup.

The Ranches

Cuyabia is surrounded by cattle ranches that own large areas of land, from 5000 hectares to 20 000 hectares. The community has weekly contact with three of the cattle ranches in the area, and almost daily someone from one of the ranches comes by the village. As I will depict, the differences in life standards in the area are striking. Ombu is the nearest ranch, with its main buildings situated 4 kilometres from the community. There are two routes that lead to Cuyabia from the main road *trans Chaco*, which goes all the way from Asunción to the Bolivian border. Both of the routes are locked and guarded at the entrances, where a guard hired by the ranches inspects all the vehicles that enter the routes. One of the routes, located about 30 kilometres from the nearest town Mariscal Estigarribia, leads to Cuyabia's closest neighbouring ranch, Ombu. Ombu consists of 5000 hectares of land, and after producing meat for about ten years; it is the oldest of the ranches in the area. The owner is a wealthy Paraguayan family. There is a mast at Ombu that provides a signal for mobile phones, and when the inhabitants of Cuyabia have to make a call, they come here, on foot, bike or scooter. Here the villagers also come to recharge the batteries of their mobile phones and their radios. Nearly every day someone from the community visits Ombu, either to make a phone call, to recharge batteries or do some other kind of errand. During the watermelon season, which lasts for about 2 months, roughly March and April, the tractor driver from Ombu gives the community a helping hand by driving them back and forth from the field to bring watermelons back to the community. Cuyabia's villagers decided to place their field in an area that was already deforested by intruders that had stolen posts before they moved there. This area is located three kilometres from their first settlement and seven

kilometres from where they live now. In the field they grow melon, watermelon and different kinds of pumpkins. To eat watermelon during the watermelon season is an important part of the social gatherings during a day. A watermelon is cut in two pieces, shared between two people, and when they are full, they hand it over to the next one. One person can eat two or three watermelons each day. Because the villagers depend on the tractor to bring the heavy watermelons to the community, they can only gather watermelon once a week – on Sundays, when the tractor and its driver have the day off. As a payment for the help, the ranch workers bring sacks of watermelon back to the ranch. The villagers also exchange watermelons and pumpkins for meat, eggs and transport to the nearest town or other necessities with Ombu. When Alter Vida visits, also they drive the villagers to the field.

If you take the other route to Cuyabia, located about 70 kilometres from the town Mariscal Estigarribia, you will pass by the entrance of the ranch Santa Rita on the right hand side about seven kilometres before arriving Cuyabia. During my stay in the community some of the villagers worked at the corn mill at Santa Rita. While working at Santa Rita, they also slept there, due to lack of transportation possibilities back and forth from the community. Cuyabia also delivers posts for fence making to Santa Rita, which I will come back to in chapter IV. At Santa Rita, they also have a mast with mobile phone signal and a little shop, where they sell soda, biscuits, caramels and *caña*[21] to the workers. The owners of Santa Rita are a rich Brazilian rancher and his son, who also own several cattle and soy ranches close to the Brazilian border in the Oriental region of Paraguay.

Of all the ranches in the area, Los Lazos is the one that the villagers depend on most. To get to Los Lazos you have to travel through the land of Cuyabia. Both of the roads that lead from the *TransChaco* route to Cuyabia ends up at the same place, right before entering the land that belongs to Cuyabia. At the time the road was made, no one occupied Cuyabia´s land[22]. Los Lazos is the newest ranch in the area, and when they started to construct the ranch about three years before the villagers moved to the area,

[21] Caña is a liquor extracted from sugarcane.
[22] No one occupied the land except from two Paraguayans who lived far away from where Los Lazos constructed the road. Who these Paraguayans are and what they do on the land of Cuyabia I will come back to in chapter five.

they made a road that leads to their entrance straight through the land of Cuyabia. Driving in the direction of Los Lazos, the community is located to the right from this road, about four kilometres beyond the entrance of Los Lazos. The main buildings of Los Lazos are located seven kilometres from the entrance. The office, the buildings where the workers sleep and the house of the owner are located there. Three brothers from Argentina are the owners of the ranch. They also have various other businesses, as a company producing soft drinks and a wine production company that they run together. The owners of the ranches in the area do not live at the ranches, but visit their ranch about once a month, yet stay only for a couple of days. Nevertheless, they all have big villas with a swimming pool outside and all their facilities inside, including a housekeeper available upon their arrival. Dependent on the size of the ranch, the ranches have between 30 and 100 employees. Most of the employees that work as *cowboys* at the ranches are from poor peasant families that live in the Oriental region of Paraguay. They work long hours six or seven days a week, and usually only have the possibility to visit their families for a few days every third month. Depending on their work position, they either have private rooms with a bath, or share room with five or six of the other workers.

Cuyabia sells a great amount of posts to Los Lazos, and the ranch also provides the villagers with work at the ranch, where they usually clear the forest for grazing land. One week I went with some of my informants to work at Los Lazos. Even though the ranch is only about 14 km away from the village, the villagers camp at the property of the ranch, because they do not have vehicles to move back and forth between work and the village. The villagers camp on the outskirts of the grazing land for one or two weeks at a time. Between every plot of grazing land there must be at least one hundred meters of forest. In one of these "forests" we camped; we tied on ropes between the trees to fasten the mosquito nets and a tarpaulin roof in case of rain. We also used tarpaulin as a floor to put the mattresses on that we brought from the village. We had to bring drinking water and food from the village. The ranch was supposed to bring us water for bathing and to do the dishes, but we had to wait for five days until one of the tractors from the ranch brought us the water. In the camp the bonfire was always lit, and used for cooking, light during the dark nights, and for heating in the cold mornings. One morning we were sitting by the bonfire, warming our cold hands and feet, and drinking sweet coffee while

waiting for the sun to rise higher in the sky and heat up the air before we could begin to work. The ranch's main buildings are located a couple of kilometres away. As we sat by the bonfire we heard the engines of one of the owners two private jets start, and after a couple of minutes it came into view above the tree tops, flying in the direction of Asunción. My work companions seemed to be amazed by the sight and sound of the airplane, especially the children, who yelled out *"airplane, airplane!"* I was struck by the vast differences that exist even on the same property of land in Paraguay, and elsewhere in Latin America. I suggest that the vast differences existing within the property of the ranch manifests the vast social differences in the country as a whole.

After the visit from the administrator of Los Lazos, some of the villagers start to prepare their things to travel with the tractor into the forest to work the next day. Others gather around the volleyball field, where they play and watch several games the rest of the morning and early afternoon. A couple of the women prepare lunch in big pots on the bonfire outside their houses. They bring the pots to the volleyball field, and hand out the food, first to their closest relatives and then to the others as far as the food reaches. One of them has made rice with small pieces of potato, and the other one has made a mix of rice and spaghetti. There are not enough plates, so we took turns turn.

The villagers are preparing to work at one of the neighbouring ranches.

Working at the ranch Los Lazos. Setting fire on piles of chopped wood.

Nutrition

The villagers' diet consists mainly of rice and spaghetti, bought in big sacks from a store in the nearest town Mariscal Estigarribia, or given as part of the payment for the work the villagers do on the neighbour ranches. The food is cooked in big pots on the bonfire, and cooking is basically a woman's activity. At least two of the three meals a day consists of rice or spaghetti, in combination with whatever they have on hand; potatoes, tomato sauce, pumpkin, beans or onion, accompanied by dried white bread, called *galletas,* also bought in big sacks. Sometimes the rice or spaghetti is eaten plain. Breakfast normally consists of *galletas*, softened in hot sweetened coffee, to make the hard bread easier to chew, or *tortillas* made with flour, water and salt, fried in oil in a frying pan on the bonfire.

Nicolas and his wife, Unine's oldest daughter, walk to Ombu to charge the batteries of the radio before they travel with the tractor into the forest to work the next day. Later that afternoon Unine takes his bike to Ombu. His scooter was brought with a representative from the local authorities to Mariscal Estigarribia last time they visited Cuyabia, to get it fixed, and he will not get it back until their next visit to the community. The local authorities visit the community approximately once a month. They provide the village with some food rations, health care and assist the village through projects, as the water wells and the houses. When Unine comes back from Ombu, he says that he called Chala, the community's main contact in Alter Vida. Unine calls Chala virtually every week to get an update on the work with the project, and to get information about planning the next visit.

Alter Vida

Most of the employees working in Alter Vida's biodiversity section have University degrees in either agricultural or forest engineering. Although Alter Vida characterizes itself as a socio-environmental NGO, none of the employees in the Biodiversity section have a background in social sciences. One is a lawyer, and a couple of them do not have a University degree. Most of the employees can be categorized as middle class. They live either in Asunción or in the suburbs that surrounds the capital. The majority of them live with their families in nice houses, and drive their car to the office every day. In conversations with all of them, I found that working in a socio-environmental

organization is a conscious choice they have made, knowing that they, with their University degrees, would have earned more working for cattle ranches or as independent traders within the private sector. In a conversation with an agricultural engineer, he explained to me that he preferred to help people in a difficult position rather than earning more working at a cattle ranch. The forest engineer in charge of the *plan de manejo forestal* project, once explained to me that she was in doubt whether she wanted to work with the project *Plan de manejo forestal,* because she would have to spend time in the Chaco region away from home, and work on the premises of the indigenous people, rather than on her own. However, the director of the NGO convinced her that working with the project would help the indigenous population to secure their land rights and use the forest in a sustainable way, she said. Several of the employees pointed out that their friends and families did not understand why they preferred to work with the indigenous population.

At night most of the villagers gather around the bonfire outside of Unine's wife's parents house. In a few weeks, in the beginning of May, Jose, Chikide's brother, will arrive Cuyabia from Ebetogue with his family. He will initially plan to stay in Cuyabia to work for a few months, and then return to Ebetogue. After only one week in the community he will tell me that Cuyabia is a beautiful place: "It is very peaceful, especially compared to Ebetogue, where the teenagers get drunk and make a lot of noise at night," and he will add "I want to move here with my family." Then he will continue to say that there is no work in Ebetogue, and around Cuyabia there is a lot of work at the ranches. I will add that there is still much forest left in Cuyabia, and Jose will nod and answer that the forest is not enough to survive, and that they have to work to buy food such as rice and spaghetti, which they cannot find in the forest. Throughout my fieldwork, I will ask all the villagers the same question, and I will receive the same answer from most of them as I receive from Jose; they prefer to live in Cuyabia because of the work nearby, and not because of the forest.

The Bonfire

Every household has a bonfire lightened all day and night. Since there is no electricity in the village, the bonfire has many functions; it is used for cooking, to warm-up on cold mornings and nights in the winter season, it keeps the insects away and provides light during the dark nights. Different kinds of firewood are used, but a type called *Palo Santo*[23] is the most used firewood due to its slow burn. *Palo Santo* has a special aroma, and the village is filled with the characteristic smell of its smoke. When the villagers do not gather on the volleyball field, they get together around the bonfire, especially at night. Usually several families gather around the same bonfire. They rarely sit by themselves in front of their own house. Around the bonfire is where the villagers discuss important topics, and where decisions are made. Both women and men usually participate actively in the discussion.

A tatu bolita on the bonfire.

[23] The same tree species that the villagers sell as posts for fence making to their neighbour ranches.

In a conversation with Rodrigo and Nicolas, two of the villagers, about the political system in Cuyabia, they explained that Unine was selected as leader after receiving most votes in the election for leader after the villagers moved to Cuyabia in 2010. Rodrigo was selected as second leader, and Nicolas the third. As they explained it, Unine's term as leader lasts for three years, at which time another election will be held. The leader can be re-selected. The leaders in Ayoreo communities are often "strong men" who are backed by the rest of the community. They are often more familiar with the larger Paraguayan society than other villagers, and they speak Spanish well (Ardaya and Salmón 2009: 208). Rodrigo, the second leader, can appear as shy, and as a man of few words. When visitors come to Cuyabia, he tends to keep distance, leaning against a tree in the background with the radio hung over his shoulder while sipping tereré. When I asked Rodrigo if a woman could be selected as a leader, he thought for a minute, before he said that there are no restrictions on women being leaders, but he has never heard of a female leader in an Ayoreo community before. Nicolas is Unine's son in-law, and the third leader of Cuyabia.

Spirituality

Unine cached three *tatu bolitas* on his way back from Ombu to Cuyabia. The *tatu bolitas* are now lying on the bonfire, while the rest of us that are gathered around it, waiting for the *tatu bolitas* to get ready to eat. There are loads of *tatu bolitas* on the land of Cuyabia. They walk quite slowly, and you can easily catch them with your hands. Even the children know how to catch them. I remember one of the first stories one of the representatives from Alter Vida told me about the Ayoreo. She said that the favourite food of the Ayoreo population is the *tatu bolita. "After eating tatu bolita, their hands are greasy and dirty. Before they go to sleep, they always wash their hands carefully, to ensure that the spirit of the animal does not come to hunt them at night. This is very important to them,"* she said enthusiastically. This is something an Ayoreo from another Ayoreo community had told her when Alter Vida participated in the movement from Ebetogue to Cuyabia the year before. I read about ancestral beliefs (Zanardini 2003: 43), and found exactly the same information that the Alter Vida representative had told me. In the beginning of my stay in Cuyabia I asked several of the villagers about the ancestral beliefs and practices. They told me that they do not practice it anymore, and that the

village does not have a shaman. The first time I tasted the *tatu bolita,* I asked Unine if they still believe that the spirits of the animals they hunt could haunt them at night. He laughed, and said that they do not believe in that anymore. This is not to say that some Ayoreo do not still believe in their ancestral religion, but from what I observed and discussed with my informants, this is something that is not present among the inhabitants of Cuyabia, which emphasizes that the Ayoreo cannot be generalized as a homogenous group.

After more than an hour on the bonfire, the tatu bolitas are ready to be eaten. They are shared among all of us that are sitting around the bonfire. I get one of the back legs. . By the time we are finished, we are all covered with animal grease, it's on our hands and around our mouth, which we will have clean before going to bed.

In this chapter I have depicted a regular day in Cuyabia. I have illustrated that both the NGO Alter Vida and the ranchers influence the everyday life in the village, and that the villagers do not live up to the image Alter Vida has of them as "the forest people"; rather than using the forest in a traditional way, they depend on working at the ranches that surround their land, which further lead to a degradation of their forest. The aim with this chapter is to build the basis for the chapters to come. In the next chapter I illustrate how Alter Vida and the ranchers produce and maintain stereotypes of the villagers in Cuyabia. In doing so, I wish to show how Alter Vida bases the forest project on an image they have of the villagers as "the forest people."

Chapter IV: Imagining the "Other"

On a cold morning in June Unine sits by the bonfire with his wife Chikide, warming his hands while waiting for the water to boil in the pot that is balancing on top of the bonfire. His eyes are swollen and red. The voice on the radio announces that the temperature is five degrees Celsius. On chilly days like these, the villagers spend most of the day in front of the bonfire to keep their hands and feet warm. The water is boiling, and Chikide mixes it with a spoon of Nescafé instant coffee, two spoons of milk powder and she does not hesitate to add several spoons of sugar. I ask Unine if he uses any medicine for his eyes. *"Yes,"* he confirms. A few days before, I went on a walk with him in the forest that surrounds the village. During Alter Vida's former visit in Cuyabia several weeks before, Alter Vida had arranged a meeting with the villagers, where they asked the villagers to name all the forest products they extract from the forest, and identify the areas where they extract these on a map of Cuyabia's 14 000 hectares of land. Firewood, *karaguata*[24]*,* medicine plants and posts for the villages' own use were mentioned, among others[25]. After the meeting with Alter Vida, Unine told me that he would take me on a walk in the forest to show me the plants that are used for medicines. So far, I had not observed anyone in the community extracting the plants for medicinal use. On our walk in the forest, Unine pointed out five different plants, among which one was for "bad eyes," he told me.

That morning I ask Unine if he uses the liquid derived from this cactus plant, named *tuna* on his *"bad eyes." "No"* he answers, and adds that he uses medicine from the *cojñone*, pharmaceutical medicine[26]. I ask Unine if the medicine from the *cojñone* is better and more effective than the natural one. *"No",* he answers, *"If the medicine from the pharmacy does not work, I use the natural one, because it is better."*

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[24] *Karaguata* is a cactus plant.
[25] Posts for sale to the ranches was not mentioned, which during my stay in the village was the most extensive extraction from the forest in Cuyabia.
[26] A nurse from the government visits the community once a month to give necessary medicine, measure and weigh the kids, and give consultations.

As the introduction story to this chapter indicates, most of the villagers in Cuyabia do not depend on the forest in the same ways as the Ayoreo did when they lived as hunters and gatherers. Rather, they have become dependent on wage labour, and consequently buy food and other necessities bought at the supermarket or from the neighbouring ranches. In this chapter, I suggest that Alter Vida bases the forest project on the image they produce of Cuyabia as "the forest people." I will first illustrate how Alter Vida emphasizes the importance of the villagers' participation in the *plan de manejo forestal* project, followed by an empirical example of how this participation works in practice. The aim of this example is to illustrate how the Alter Vida representatives maintain the image they have of the villagers as "the forest people," and impose it on the villagers. Further, I illustrate how Alter Vida and the ranches produce images of the villagers in Cuyabia. I claim that the Alter Vida representatives and the neighbouring ranches produce stereotypes of the villagers, and of each other, which influence their interaction with the villagers, and hence the forest project.

The Participation of the Villagers

The Alter Vida representatives constantly stressed the importance of letting the villagers participate in the whole process of the project. Alter Vida's strategy fits into Crate and Nuttalls proposition that the local people themselves have to define the risk related to fast changes because adaptation to climate change happens at a local level (Crate and Nuttall 2009: 13-16).

In conversations I had with the Alter Vida representatives about the project, they often stressed that it is the villagers of Cuyabia that make all the decisions regarding the project, and that they as the NGO representatives have to adjust to the work habits and lifestyle of the villagers of the community. *"When we are in Cuyabia we have to adapt to their way of life. If they do not want to work before 9 a.m. or if they prefer not to work during weekends, we have to accept that",* Chala and Monica explained to me many times. As the director of Alter Vida once said in a meeting with their partner NGO Yvy Porã at the office of Alter Vida: *"Alter Vida and Yvy Porã are simple facilitators and administrators. This is not a strengthening institutional project, but rather a project to*

strengthen the indigenous communities". The Alter Vida representatives often specified that it is important for them that the people of the community participate in the whole process of the project, that the local population are the ones that make the decisions, not themselves as employees of an NGO. The participation of the local community was important for the NGO, but often easier said than done. In the next section I will demonstrate how this participation-view of Alter Vida work in practice in the decision-making phase of the project.

The Project Put Into Practice

My second trip to Cuyabia was in February 2011 with four representatives from Alter Vida. Upon arrival in the community, Unine asks Chala if they can give some of the villagers a ride to the common field to have a look at how the watermelons and the pumpkins are growing. Since it has been raining a lot lately, Unine says he will bring several of the villagers from the community, in case we have to push the pickup out of the mud. *"The watermelons and pumpkins are growing fast,"* Unine determines when we arrive the field, and he adds that they have been lucky with the weather recently, after several years of drought. On our way back from the field we stop, and some of the villagers that came along jump off the back of the pickup, and pass the fence that separates Cuyabia's land from the land of the ranch Los Lazos. The *patron* had permitted the villagers to grow pumpkins in a small field there at the time they were settled by the entrance of Los Lazos. The rest of us; the four representatives from the NGO, Unine and I, find shelter from the burning hot sun under the trees next to the muddy road. Chala uses the opportunity to ask Unine if Alter Vida can arrange a meeting with the community the next day, where they explain more about the project and how it will develop from here. Unine answers that he has discussed the topic with the administrators at the neighbouring ranches, and has decided that he prefers a *plan de uso de la tierra*[27] rather than a *plan de manejo forestal*. Monica, the forest engineer in charge of the forest project, explains to Unine with a serious tone to her voice, that Alter Vida will help the community to make a *plan de manejo forestal* to protect its forest through sustainable use. She adds that *plan de uso de la tierra* costs a lot of money that neither Cuyabia nor Alter Vida can afford, which would also lead to the loss of Cuyabia's

[27] A *Plan de uso de la tierra* is a licence that permits deforestation for grazing land.

forest. Unine states that he prefers to do cattle ranching rather than conserving the forest, since it is expected more droughts in the years to come. Then the forest will die anyway, he claims. Monica asks what the cows will eat during the drought, and explains that if the forest dies, the grasslands will also dry up. *"If you conserve the forest,"* she continues, "*it will stay green, and it is even possible for the community to own cows without chopping down your forest."* When the others come back from the field, and Chala, Monica and Unine agree to talk more about the differences between a *plan de uso de la tierra* and *plan de manejo forestal* in a meeting with the community the next day.

Back at Alter Vida's tent camp in the community, Monica and Chala explain to me that it is the ranchers that have tried to convince Unine to cut down the forest, which would benefit them, not the community. *"The ranchers tell Unine that they will provide the villagers with a few cattle, maybe 30 or so,"* Chala says with a worried expression on his face. Monica nods agreeing. *"Then,"* Chala continues, *"when the community has deforested all their land, the rancheros will claim that the cattle belong to them, and the community will have lost both their forest and the cattle, leaving them with nothing left."*

Early next morning, Alter Vida arranges a meeting with the community regarding the *plan de manejo forestal* project. Monica and Chala are in charge of the meeting. The villagers bring their plastic chairs and gather around a board the NGO has put up for the occasion near their tent camp, not far away from Unine's house. Monica has made a poster where she has written the differences between a *plan de uso de la tierra* and a *plan de manejo forestal,* even though the majority of the villagers do not know how to read. Many of the villagers are working at the ranch Santa Rita, and are not present currently. All the villagers that are present in the community participate in the meeting. Monica explains to them that they will benefit more from the *plan de manejo* than from a *plan de uso*. She repeats what she told Unine the day before, that a *plan de uso* costs more money than both the community and the NGO can afford. She adds that the project also will help the village to obtain its land title. Chala asks Unine: *"Why did you move from Ebetogue?"* Before Unine has the chance to answer, Chala answers his own question: *"It was because there was no forest left in Ebetogue, right? It was to once again live in the forest"*. That way Chala maintains the image Alter Vida has of the villagers of Cuyabia as "the forest people," and the incident clearly does not represent what Alter

Vida constantly emphasises both to themselves and about the community: to let the local population decide through the whole process of the project. Instead of answering the question that Chala had already answered on behalf of him, Unine says with a low, but unsteady voice: *"I will not cut down the forest, because I have not got any money, not even a tractor, nothing."* He is referring to the *plan de uso de la tierra*, which he, the day before, had indicated he preferred instead of conserving the forest by joining the *plan de manejo forestal* project. All the communication during the meeting is between Monica, Chala and Unine. Unine further translates to those of the villagers who do not understand Spanish. The villagers discuss in Ayoreo for a while, before Unine informs the NGO representatives, in Spanish, about their decision: *"We agree to participate in the project."* Chala, turned to all the villagers at this point, says: *"The only thing we [Alter Vida] win from this project is your satisfaction*."

Here, the villagers and the Alter Vida representatives meet in a social interface, where Alter Vida is in power (Long 1989). The Alter Vida representatives use the image they have of the villagers as "the forest people" to convince the villagers to participate in the project. Alter Vida is in control of the financials of the project, and the view they have of the villagers fit into the description and the aim of the forest project (Conklin and Graham 1995). Hence, I suggest that the Alter Vida representatives maintain the image they have of the villagers by imposing the image on the villagers, rather than listening to what they have to say. By implementing a sustainable development project with the aim to conserve the forest based on the villagers' traditional knowledge, Alter Vida ascribes the villagers in Cuyabia a life based on sustainable use of the forest and conservation of the biodiversity. I claim, however, that the environmentalist image Alter Vida ascribes Cuyabia, produce an image of the villagers that does not necessarily coincide with their reality (Brosius 1999: 310). The Alter Vida representatives do not take into consideration the fact that the villagers have lived away from the land where their ancestors lived the last fifty years, and as my empirical examples throughout this thesis demonstrate, the villagers do not depend on the forest to get sufficient food or other necessary products, and much of the knowledge about the forest is on the verge of being lost. I will further present how some of the Alter Vida representatives ascribe the villagers' spiritual values as part of the production of the villagers as "the forest people" (Brosius 1999).

Meetings in Cuyabia with representatives from Alter Vida regarding the plan de manejo forestal project.

Spiritual Singing

Several of the Alter Vida representatives ascribed the villagers a cultural possession that does not coincide with the reality of all the villagers. I will give an empirical example of a spiritual ascription, followed by the villagers' reactions.

The Ayoreo have a characteristic way of singing that originates from before they got in contact with the larger Paraguayan society. The singing, among other Ayoreo traditions, is at risk of falling into obscurity, several of my informants conveyed to me, as only the oldest generation in Cuyabia practice the traditional way of singing. One person sings at the time, usually without any instrument. The lyrics can tells a tale of time gone by and of events real or invented, often made-up on the spur of the moment at the time he or she sings. At times one of the older ladies sings over the radio that they use to communicate with other Ayoreo communities. It is not unusual that Unine's father in law starts to sing at 4 am. One early morning he starts to sing when two representatives from Alter Vida are spending the night. Up until then, I had never heard any of the villagers sing while someone from Alter Vida was present in the village. Both of them heard the singing, and the next morning, I hear both of them commenting on it while they are preparing for a meeting with the community. One of them says that he thinks that a woman must have given birth during the night, which must be the reason why the old man was singing, he claims. I comment that there is no pregnant woman in the community, and that he often sings during the night. The representative from Alter Vida continues to talk about the singing, and that it must have some special kind of spiritual meaning, without listening to what I say and without asking anyone from the community what the song was about. Thereby, the representative from Alter Vida invents his own story about the singing, which does not necessarily have anything to do with the reality. I had earlier asked various members of the community what the songs were about. One of the songs that Unine's father-in-law at times got up at 4 am to sing, was about a man that had been left by his wife, I was told. That night, after the NGO representatives had left, I once again asked about the singing, while sitting by the bonfire with Unine and his family. I ask them if the singing last night was related to ancestral beliefs or if the song had some kind of spiritual meaning. Unine laughs, and says that the songs do not have much spiritual meaning anymore. He repeats what he

has told me before, that his father in-law sings about whatever comes into his mind, a story from the past or the present that captivates his attention.

Stereotyping the Villagers of Cuyabia

By inventing their own explanations as to why villagers' activities, such as singing are performed, and by ascribing the villagers a close relation to the forest, the representatives from Alter Vida all produce images of "the other" (West 2006: 151-160). Hence, I suggest that the Alter Vida representatives are producing stereotypes of the villagers. Stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes difference, and separates the normal and acceptable from the unnatural and unacceptable, excluding everything that does not fit in, everything that is different (Hall 1997: 258). Hence, the Alter Vida representatives chose to emphasize the image they have of the villagers as natural conservationists in the stereotyping of the villagers. Stereotypes refer as much to what is imagined through fantasy as to what is interpreted as real (Hall 1997: 263). I suggest that Alter Vida produces a stereotype of the villagers that fits into the *plan de manejo forestal* project.

So far I have illustrated how the Alter Vida representatives produces and maintain an image of the villagers as "the forest people." I have argued that the produced image corresponds to the aim of the *plan de manejo forestal* project: contribute to a sustainable development based on the traditional knowledge of the villagers (Alter Vida 2011b). Further, I will illustrate how the ranchers are producing stereotypes of the villagers in Cuyabia, and I suggest that also Alter Vida and the ranchers are producing images of each other, and, as I will illustrate, the ranchers and the Alter Vida representatives seem to produce similar images of each other.

Lazy and Ignorant?

The villagers often talked about the ranchers in the area. The main topics were the work the ranchers were doing, the way they lived at the ranches, and that they ate beef every day. The ranchers also seemed to talk about the villagers, and as the Alter Vida representatives, I claim that the ranchers produced stereotypes of the villagers. On any given Sunday, workers from the three neighbouring ranches visited Cuyabia to play

volleyball and to chat with the girls. Except from these Sunday afternoons the ranchers did not spend much time in the Cuyabia. When the administrators of the ranchers came to arrange work or pay the villagers, they usually stopped on the road outside of the village. The tractors from the ranches came to pick up the villagers when they were working at the ranches, and the villagers met the ranchers when they went to the ranches to recharge batteries or make phone calls. Even though the ranchers affect the everyday life in the village, they did not spend much time with the villagers. Still, they seemed to have clear ideas and opinions about the everyday life in Cuyabia. All the administrators from the three ranches at some point asked me how I could live with *"these people"* in the forest. As Næsse (2009) depicts in her Master thesis based on a fieldwork among the elite in Asunción, the elite saw the indigenous population and other poor as both without physical and mental resources; "stupidity, underdevelopment as humans and ignorance was frequent in descriptions of the poor" (Næsse 2009: 23). From the conversations I had with the ranch administrators, I got the impression that they saw the villagers in Cuyabia in the same way as Næsse's informants depicted the poor; as lazy and ignorant.

One day I hitchhike with one of the administrators of the ranch Los Lazos to the town Mariscal Estigarribia, to buy more food rations at the super market. I ask him what his impression of the villagers in Cuyabia is like. He tells me that they are his friends, and that he appreciates them a lot. I get a feeling that what he says is not completely true. The few times before when I had spoken with him, he, as most of the ranchers, asked me how "these people" treated me.

On our way to Mariscal Estigarribia, I continue to ask about his relations with the people living in Cuyabia. He continues to say that he always has had a good impression of them, that he always has thought that they are nice people with good intentions, but that his *patron*, the owner of the ranch, had not been happy when he heard that a group of indigenous people had settled by the entrance of his ranch, where the villagers first settled when they arrived at the land of Cuyabia. He explains that one morning in August the year before (2010), when he was monitoring the land of Los Lazos, he discovered the group that had settled by the entrance, accompanied by the local authorities and several NGOs, as far as he understood. He had talked to someone that he assumed was one of the

NGO representatives, who told him that this was the land of the Ayoreo, and that they had come to settle there. *"I went back to the ranch to report to my patron what I had just observed,"* the administrator says. Then he continues to explain that his *patron* was not happy about the news: *"He furiously claimed that I had to expel "these people," that they had settled there illegally, and that they would steal from the ranch, and meant nothing but trouble."* The administrator continues the story by saying that he had calmed down his *patron* by saying that "*these people*" will not do us any harm or steal anything from the ranch. Then he had claimed that "*these people"* were harmless, and that Los Lazos could help them out and at the same time gain something from them by giving them work at the ranch, the administrator continues. He ends his explanation by saying that his *patron* now understands that *"these people"* are good people, and that he appreciates them as much as he does himself. Cuyabia provides the ranches with cheap labour. As Stunnenberg notes, the ranches near Indigenous communities in the Chaco often pay low wages to the indigenous population, as they do not have to compete for their labour (Stunnenberg 1993: 239).

Of Cuyabia's three neighbouring ranches, Ombu was the only ranch that the villagers did not work at during my stay in Cuyabia. On one of the Sunday trips to the community field with the tractor from Ombu in the watermelon season, I asked one of the two administrators that came along to help, why Ombu does not hire anyone from Cuyabia. He answered that the indigenous population has a reputation of being lazy, and that was the reason why Ombu's *patron* preferred not to hire anyone from Cuyabia.

From these empirical examples I conclude that the main perception among the ranchers is that the villagers in Cuyabia are indolent and ignorant. These are common stereotypes of the indigenous peoples, not only produced by the ranchers, but also by the larger national society (Reed 1995; Næsse 2009). As Hall (1997: 258-259) notes, stereotyping often arise where great inequalities exist in power relations. The power is usually directed towards the subordinated and excluded group, which I suggest is evident in the overall perception of the indigenous peoples as indolent and ignorant in Paraguay. Hall (1997) further suggests that stereotyping is what Foucault (1980) names a power/knowledge game, which classifies humans by a norm, and construct the excluded as "the others." Thus, there is a connection between representation, difference and

power within stereotyping (Hall 1997: 259). I claim that this connection is evident in the way the Alter Vida representatives and the ranchers produce stereotypes of the villagers. Further, I will depict the stereotypes the ranchers and the representatives from Alter Vida produce of each other, regarding their involvement with the villagers in Cuyabia. I found that they imagined each other in a similar way; both claimed that the other part was taking advantage of the villagers in Cuyabia.

Corruption and exploitation

During my stay in Cuyabia, I witnessed that both the administrators of two of the ranches, Los Lazos and Ombu, and the NGO representatives had clear ideas about each other as being corrupt based on the other's interaction with the villagers in Cuyabia, inferring that the other is taking advantage of them. In this section I will go further into these imaginations by illustrating some empirical examples, and discuss how these perceptions may affect Cuyabia.

When there was water in a small lake situated not far from the community field, it was impossible to get to all parts of the land of Cuyabia without going through the land of the ranch Los Lazos. Once some of the Alter Vida representatives came to visit, to map the land of Cuyabia on a GPS and mark where different plants and animals are found on the different part of the land if Cuyabia, they had to ask for permission from Los Lazos to drive through the land of the ranch to get to a major road, called *Picada 108*. The mapping was a part of the *plan de manejo forestal* project, and was done in collaboration with the villagers. Hence, Unine, a couple of the other villagers and I came along to participate in the mapping of Cuyabia's land. We had to drive a few kilometres before we came to the other side of the land of Cuyabia, where Unine had locked the entrance with a padlock, to detain anyone from falling for the temptation to enter their land. The *ingeniero*[28] working at Los Lazos was evidently not pleased with Alter Vida's pick up entering the property of Los Lazos, as he rolled down the window of the huge pickup truck he was driving, asking Alter Vida's driver what we wanted, without even saying a polite hello. He gave us the permission to drive through the property of Los Lazos. The

[28] An agronomic engineer, called *el ingeniero* by both the villagers and the workers at Los Lazos.

Alter Vida representatives did not seem to be pleased with the encounter with the *ingeniero*. They commented, as they had done several times before, that the ranchers are corrupt, and that they take advantage of the villagers in Cuyabia. A few weeks after the encounter between Alter Vida and the *ingeniero*, the ranch decided to lock the entrance with a padlock, and the administrator explained to Unine that extraneous had been observed on the ranch's property. Unine could still pass with his scooter without having a key, he assured Unine.

On the ride to Mariscal Estigarribia, the administrator at Los Lazos emphasized that the villagers never get anything for free. *"They have to learn that in this world we do not get anything for free. We give them what they need, and in return they give us labour. If not, they will only sit there, waiting for us to help them, as the authorities and the NGO do."* He further said that the NGOs take advantage of the indigenous peoples, as the NGO employees drive around in nice cars, while the indigenous communities continue to live on poverty.

From these empirical examples I conclude that ranchers and the Alter Vida representatives are sceptical about each other. Both talk about each other as corrupt, as only caring about earning money and taking advantage of the indigenous population of Cuyabia. They both produce similar stereotypes directed at each other, which they further impose on the villagers in Cuyabia. As illustrated in the beginning of this chapter, the ranchers and Alter Vida try to impose their own agenda on the villagers. Hence, the empirical examples regarding the ranchers add to my argument that the ranchers affect the everyday life in the village.

Alter Vida is Helping Cuyabia

While producing images of the ranchers as corrupt and taking advantage of the villagers, the Alter Vida representatives consider their own actions to be helping Cuyabia. The Alter Vida representatives all expressed their empathy towards the indigenous people, and some in particular with the Ayoreo and even the villagers of Cuyabia. I do not doubt their sympathy or their willingness to contribute by offering the indigenous people improved living conditions. Rather, I argue that their sympathy is based on an illusion

that they have of the indigenous people that, at least in the case of Cuyabia, does not coincide with the reality of the villagers. However, as I depicted in the introduction chapter, Alter Vida alone does not produce the image the Alter Vida representatives have of Cuyabia. The image of the Ayoreo as the forest people is an expanded perception among local government officials and NGOs in the Paraguayan Chaco region, and may also be influenced by legislation that recognizes the indigenous peoples as culturally distinct, and the need for financial support from sympathetic donors (Blaser 2004; Conklin and Graham 1995).

Identification with indigenous peoples can be a political statement: it may imply a critique of Western cultural dominance and colonial regimes and locates the ones who identify with the indigenous population in opposition to their own societies' materialism and exploitation (Conklin & Graham 1995: 702). The Alter Vida representatives' own lives in the capital are distant from the forest environment in Cuyabia. As they see environmental consciousness as natural to the villagers in Cuyabia, the villagers are ascribed an identity as "Ecologically Noble Savages" by referring to the as the forest people (Conklin & Graham 1995; Dahl 1993; Ellen 1986; Redford 1991). Hence, I suggest that the Alter Vida representatives contribute to the circulation of certain images connecting the forest to the villagers of Cuyabia, and in the implementation of the *plan de manejo forestal* project act upon them as if they were real (Carrier and Miller 1998; West 2006: 9). These imaginations may be used to legitimize their interactions with the community, and to apply for economical support from donators, and to implement the project to help the villagers to take care of the forest in which they once again reside (Blaser 2004; Conklin & Graham 1995; West 2006).

Cuyabia in Possession of Symbolic Capital

The forest is home to more people than the indigenous population, and they are all affected by deforestation and climate change. Not all forest dependent communities, however, are seen as natural conservationists of their environment. Nygren (2000) has in her study among peasants in Costa Rica focused on their relation to the forest and how it has changed throughout the last century. She claims that there is coherence between the global discourses regarding natural resources and development and the

change in the peasant population's relation to the forest. As briefly outlined in the introduction, development in Latin America since the beginning of the 1900s has changed over the decades. Forest-covered land was once considered worthless and trees needed to be removed in order to make it productive. Productivity was achieved by building roads and by the expansion of different plantations in the 1960s and the expansion of cattle ranching in the 1970s. Protecting the forest through strict conservation measures and the establishment of national parks was the initial game-changer that occurred in the 1980s. The strict preservation paradigm shifted towards the participative models in the 1990s (Ferrero 2012; Dove 2006; Nygren 2000). After decades of cutting down the forest due to new developmental ideas, the result has been that the peasant population Nygren has studied does not know how to use nor conserve the forest. Paradoxically, earlier they were encouraged to cut down the forest in the name of development, today conservation and plantation of forest is seen as development (Nygren 2000). Much of the same can be said about the villagers of Cuyabia; the missionaries, supported by the National authorities, took the Ayoreo out of the forest to "domesticate" them and include them in the social and economic development of the country (IWGIA 2010; Renshaw 1988; von Bremen 2000). Now they have been incentivised by NGOs and local authorities to move back to the forest in the name of development. In contrast to the peasant population that Nygren (2000) describes, who are seen as destroyers of the forest, the villagers of Cuyabia, as indigenous people, are seen as protectors of the forest, despite living 50 years near the Mennonite city Filadelfia, producing charcoal and firewood and working as wage labourers at the cattle ranches. Each of these activities has lead to on-going deforestation (von Bremen 2000). I suggest that the indigenous peoples, and in Paraguay the Ayoreo in particular, are seen as "the forest people" due to the symbolic capital they possess as natural conservationists, which they are ascribed by NGOs, local authorities, the media and literature. Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as:

"capital in whatever form – insofar as it is represented, i.e., apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition, presupposes the intervention of the habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive capacity" (Bourdieu 1996: 91).

Thereby, symbolic capital is not characterized as one of the three forms of capital: economic, social and cultural capital. Rather, symbolic capital can be any of the three forms of capital that are perceived and valued in specific ways, and constituted by these perceptions (Bourdieu 1996; Bugge 2002: 236). Hence, symbolic capital is referred to as the resources available to an individual on the basis of some kind of recognition, which in this case are the Indigenous peoples recognized as natural conservationists. The symbolic capital functions as an authoritative embodiment of cultural value. The fact that the villagers of Cuyabia are Indigenous entails that no one questions their knowledge about the forest (Conklin & Graham 1995).

Because biodiversity is regarded as a public good, either indigenous people are expected to become "stewards" (not legitimate owners) of such good, or they themselves are transformed into a public commodity, a readily available resource for developers and project proponents (Novellino 2007: 101).

The non-indigenous forest-dwellers, as the peasant population Nygren (2000) has studied, are not in possession of symbolic capital as natural conservationists. Thereby, they are not imagined as *Ecologically Noble Savages*, as is the case of the indigenous people (Conklin and Graham 1995: 702-703). The "Ecologically Noble Savageness" that the symbolic capital represents is constructed from outside, and does not come from the inside of indigenous populations. In many cases, also the indigenous peoples use their symbolic capital to negotiate and achieve self-determination and support from outsiders (Doolittle 2010; Ferrero 2012; Conklin & Graham 1995). During my stay in Cuyabia, however, I did not observe the villagers refer to themselves as "the forest people," nor did they utilize the symbolic capital in interaction with the ranches, the NGO Alter Vida or the local authorities. Rather than negotiating by using the symbolic capital they are ascribed by Alter Vida, the villagers in Cuyabia seem perceive and take part in the *plan de manejo forestal* project in ways to satisfy their own needs, which differ from the traditional forest-use perspective Alter Vida promote by the project. The different expectations to the forest project will be the focus point of the next chapter.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have illustrated how the Alter Vida representatives and the ranchers produce stereotypes of the villagers of Cuyabia. The production of stereotypes can be said to legitimate their interactions with the villagers: the ranchers provide the "lazy and ignorant people" with work, while the Alter Vida representatives help "the forest people" to conserve their forest. Hence, the aim of this chapter is to illustrate that Alter Vida bases the forest project on the image they have of the villagers as "the forest people." I have suggested that the symbolic capital Alter Vida ascribes the villagers contributes to the maintenance of the image they have of the villagers as "the forest people." Comparing the image Alter Vida produces of the villagers with the everyday life in Cuyabia, as depicted in the former chapter, I suggest that the image of the villagers as "the forest people" does not concur with the everyday life in Cuyabia. I argue, however, that the image fits into the *plan de manejo forestal* project Alter Vida is implementing in the village, which, as I depicted in the introduction chapter, is based on various factors.

Secondly, I have included the way the ranchers perceive and interact with the villagers. I have illustrated that the ranchers and the Alter Vida representatives produce similar stereotypes of each other, as both are blaming the other for taking advantage of the villagers in Cuyabia. I have suggested that the ranchers produce a stereotype of the villagers as "lazy and ignorant," which, as I have claimed, is a prevalent image of the indigenous people in Paraguay. I have tried to illustrate that the image the ranchers have of the villagers affect their interaction with the village. Hence, I suggest that the ranchers influence the forest project through the interaction with the villagers. This, I will explore further in the following chapter. The next chapter also illustrates the different expectations Cuyabia and Alter Vida have from the forest project.

Chapter V: A sense of time

One sunny day in May, the representatives from Alter Vida are in Cuyabia to present the *plan de manejo forestal* document. The villagers must validate the document before Alter Vida present it to INFONA (the National Forest Institute) for approval. *"First, the municipality of Mariscal Estigarribia must validate the document, followed by the department of Boquerón,"* Chala explains to the villagers. *"Then, the document must be presented to SEAM (the Secretary of Environment) before it can me validated by INFONA. The validation process will take approximately three months,"* he continues. The Alter Vida representatives have elaborated the document after their last visit in the village, when they, in collaboration with the villagers, mapped the land of Cuyabia, and the villagers use of the forest. The villagers approve the document, and it can be sent to INFONA for approval.

After the meeting, one of the Alter Vida representatives order two handmade bags from the women in the village, after seeing many villagers with bags with their name on it, made of colourful woollen threads bought at the supermarket. The representative tells Unine that he wants one of those bags with the name "Victor" on it, and another one with the name "Carmen". He writes the names, one above the other; on a board the NGO uses to write on during the meetings with the village. He adds that he wants them to be colourful, with the colours that represent the Ayoreo people. Chikide, Unine's wife nods.

About a week later, I participate in a seminar in Filadelfia, where the Alter Vida representative that ordered the bags is present. He asks me if Unine's wife has started on his bags. I answer that I do not know, that I have not seen her making any bags lately. I add that there is not much woollen thread left, and that might be the reason why she has not started yet. The representative answers that he does not want the bags made of

thread bought at the supermarket, but of the traditional thread made of *karaguata*[29], with the natural colours red, black and white, as the traditional *utebebes*[30].

A few weeks later Unine, his wife and several of the other villagers return to Cuyabia from a meeting with UNAP (Unión de Nativos Ayoreo de Paraguay) in another Ayoreo village, located close to the Mennonite town Filadelfia. Everyone present in the community gather outside of Unine's house, as they use to do when someone from the community has been away, and brought food from the supermarket back to the village. We eat biscuits and caramels, and Unine hands out fresh bread and ham to everyone. The women that went to the meeting have all brought new bags made of woollen thread in all different colours and patterns back to the village. Unine's wife takes a bag out of a plastic bag, and holds it up in front of her. *"Uneja pise*[31]*!"* several of the villagers exclaim. The bag has the two names "Victor" and "Carmen" written on it, one above the other. It turns out that Unine's wife had given the task to another woman in another village, who is famous for her bags with names and other kinds of patterns on them. *"She makes prettier bags than anyone in Cuyabia,"* Unine's wife claims. The bag is made of woollen thread with the colours red and blue, the colours of *Cerro Porteño*, the favourite Paraguayan football team of nearly everyone in the community. I ask Unine's wife if it is possible to make bags with names on them from the *karaguata* thread as well. *"No,"* she says. The Alter Vida representative had gotten what he asked for: the colours that represented the villagers – the colours of their favourite football team.

This chapter focuses on some of the expectations the villagers have to the forest project. I claim that their expectations do not coincide with Alter Vida's expectations of a sustainable development based on the traditional use of the forest (Alter Vida 2011b). I suggest that the different expectations of the villagers and the Alter Vida representatives may be explained by their different views and perceptions of the future. Further, I depict how the villagers' work is directed exclusively towards the returns from their labour. I suggest that their focus on immediate return can be explained by their past as hunters and gatherers that later has been replaced by wage labour, still focused directly on the

[29] *Karaguata* is a wild cactus plant that grows everywhere in the forest of Cuyabia.
[30] The handmade bags made of threads from the cactus plant *karaguata* are named *utebebe* in the Ayoreo language.
[31] *Uneja pise* signifies very beautiful/tasty in the Ayoreo language.

returns. The aim with this chapter is to illustrate the different expectations the villagers and the Alter Vida representatives have to the forest project. I argue that the villagers' work habits may lead to challenges throughout the implementation of the forest project. First, I will introduce the process in making the bags of *karaguata*, before I depict a meeting in the village with Alter Vida, where the Alter Vida representatives, as part of the *plan de manejo forestal* project, suggest making a plantation of *karaguata* to increase the production of the bags. Thereafter, I illustrate the villagers' attitude towards Alter Vida's suggestion.

Making the Bags of *Karaguata*

Making the *karaguata* bags is a woman's activity. The cactus plant *karaguata*, which the women utilize to make the traditional handiwork bags, grows everywhere in the forest surrounding Cuyabia, and the women collect it in the area that surrounds the village.

They collect the whole plant; remove the spines and the wet part of the plant by shoving them out with the backside of a knife on a hard groundsheet. What remains of the plant, has to dry in the sun for a couple of days before the women make threads out of it by rolling it together on their thighs. The Ayoreo women traditionally made skirts and bags of the *karaguata*, but today they wear modern clothes and do not make the traditional skirts anymore. They make handbags and bracelets that they sell to the Alter Vida representatives that visit the community. Unine once told me that he sometimes bring some of the bags when he travels to Asunción, and sells them to a touristic store. The prices are not good – between 30 000 and 100 000 Guaranies[32], depending on the size and the quality of the bag. According to the women, they need about three months to finish one bag. Making the bags is not a full-time job. Rather, the women sew in social settings. They usually sew during the daylight hours, and sometimes around the bonfire at night. They say that it is a lot of work to make one bag, and they do not seem to be interested in increasing their production. The traditional Ayoreo bags have different patterns with the colours white, black and red. Each clan has a pattern that represents them (Ardaya and Salmón 2009). The natural colour of the thread is white. The black colour the women get from a small black fruit. The red colour comes from the bark from a tree. Both are easily accessed in the forest that surrounds the village. To get the different colours the threads are boiled in water with the corresponding colour source. Most of the women today prefer to buy artificial colour from the store rather than go into the forest to find the fruit and the bark to colour the thread. Most of the younger women, in the twenties and younger, did not sew the traditional bags. When I asked them, some of them told me that they knew how to sew, but they did not have time to do it. Those that did not know how to sew told me that they wanted to learn. The women from the older generations, 40 and up all sewed both bags and bracelets.

Donkeys or Karaguata? No, thank you, we want a pickup!

As part of the project *Plan de manejo forestal* Alter Vida has ten million guaranies[33] available to invest in a project activity in each of the ten communities that participate in the project. At a meeting with the community the Alter Vida representatives presented

[32] Approximately between US$ 7 and US$ 23.
[33] US$ 2300.

this part of the project to the villagers; Monica and Chala suggested two options enthusiastically that they imagined could be useful for the villagers living in Cuyabia. The first option was to buy donkeys that could be used for monitoring the land of the village and bring products from the field and the forest back to the village. The second option was to make a plantation of *karaguata* nearby the village, with the idea in mind that the women could make more bags of *karaguata* for sale. Unine translates what Monica and Chala have suggested. The villagers discuss for a while, before Unine tells the Alter Vida representatives that if the women are interested, they will accept the *karaguata* plantation. As the goal of the *plan de manejo forestal* project is to introduce plausible, sustainable ideas, but to ultimately let the villagers decide on the details of the project, the Alter Vida representatives suggest that the villagers can think about the project for a while, and discuss with each other before they make a decision.

That night, after the NGO has left for Asunción, the villagers discuss the project while gathered around the bonfire. I understand that they are talking about the project, but I cannot follow their conversation in Ayoreo. I observe that most of them, both women and men, old and young, take part in the discussion. At this point my fieldwork is coming to an end, and the villagers have got used to explaining to me what they are talking about in social settings. Unine updates me regularly as the discussion proceeds. Finally he states that they have changed their minds, and do not want a *karaguata* plantation after all. *"Karaguata plants surround the village, and there are large amounts of the plant all over the forest,"* he states. *"It takes a long time to finish a bag of karaguata, about three months,"* he continues, as they all have told me several times before. He adds that the women will not need more *karaguata* than what already exists around the village. *"We rather prefer to buy a pickup for the money that Alter Vida wants to invest in the project,"* Unine explains before he says that they could use some of the money they earn from the ranches, together with the ten million guaranies from the NGO, to buy a used pickup. *"A pickup is much more useful than the donkeys Chala suggested*," he claims. *"We can use it to travel to Mariscal to buy the necessities from the supermarket, drive to the hospital if anyone gets sick, monitor our land more often, travel back and forth from work at the ranches and in the forest without having to camp there and also bring heavy products from the field and the forest back to the community,"* he continues. I understand my informants' desire to have the ability to move around in a vehicle, without depending on

the ranches, and I wonder how this suggestion will fit into Alter Vida's conservation project[34].

Alter Vida Impose Their Own Agenda on Cuyabia

The representatives from Alter Vida were enthusiastic about the bags made of *karaguata,* and several of them bought bags when visiting the community. During my stay in Cuyabia, they were the only ones that bought bags from the villagers, except from me. The market for the bags is small, and due to the lack of transportation, and the large distance to the nearest town and Asunción, the possibilities the villagers have to benefit from selling the bags are few. Hence, the idea that "commodities based on in situ biological diversity will lead to income generation for local people in conservation-as-development projects, is fundamentally flawed" (West 2006: 199). Also, the implementation of a project that supports a certain activity without sufficient knowledge regarding the effects the investment in the activity will entail, may, and most likely will, lead to unforeseen consequences (Archetti 1986; West 2006). I have no foundation to claim that the suggestions from Alter Vida will not succeed if implemented. Rather, I emphasize that the empirical example demonstrates that Alter Vida and Cuyabia have different expectations to the forest project.

A critique that has been raised against NGOs is that they impose their own agendas on their projects, and thereby act in self-interest rather than helping the people they in theory are supporting (Lewis and Kanji 2009: 18). Morris-Suzuki (2000: 68) notes that "NGOs may pursue change, but they can equally work to maintain existing social and political systems" (cited in Lewis and Kanji 2009: 4). Alter Vida works for change, a better condition for the indigenous population, at the same time as they work to maintain what they see as the existing indigenous way of life of the villagers in Cuyabia. While Alter Vida supports the imagined traditional way of life of the villagers in Cuyabia, the villagers themselves prefer a more modern kind of development, e.g. a pickup, as demonstrated in the empirical example above.

[34] I was not able to observe Unine present Cuyabia's suggestion for the project, because the next time representatives from Alter Vida visited the village, a conflict regarding the land of Cuyabia had emerged, and both the villagers and Alter Vida focused on this emerging conflict. I will depict the conflict in the next chapter.

Environmentalists' primarily goal is to promote sustainable systems of natural resource management. Indigenous peoples ultimately seek self-determination and control over their resources (Conklin & Graham 1995). Von Bremen claims that the Ayoreo have one basic economic strategy for dealing with the external programs that aim to solve the problems of indigenous peoples by integrating them into the dominant society: they adapt to imposed economic activities as governmental and NGO projects, development aid, and wage labour, by acquiring the resources connected with these activities in such a way that they are able to follow their own interests and satisfy their own needs (von Bremen 2000: 281-282). From the empirical example above, I suggest that Cuyabia is no exception from von Bremen's depiction of how the Ayoreo deal with external projects. Hence, I argue that the villagers and Alter Vida representatives have different expectations to the *plan de manejo forestal* project.

Further in this chapter I depict the work habits of the villagers in Cuyabia. As von Bremen points out, the Ayoreo in their present economic condition, occupy certain roles such as wage labourers; a target group of development projects; or merely poor, ignorant, or needy people, as is the image the ranchers have of the villagers. Long-term development projects directed towards indigenous people in the Chaco region, invariably experience changes during their implementation, von Bremen claims (von Bremen 2000: 279). To the despair of the NGO workers and government officials that are implementing the projects, they also "fail to fulfil their objectives since the target group does not participate in the way expected and defined by the project management" (von Bremen 2000: 279). First, I illustrate Cuyabia's main source of income during my stay in the village: the sale of posts to the neighbouring ranches.

Posts of *Palo Santo*[35]

The ranches surrounding Cuyabia are currently expanding the grazing land for their cattle. Therefore, the ranches are in a constant need of posts to construct fences on the land they are deforesting. Palo Santo, which is a protected species in Paraguay, is the most popular wood in the area, due to its long-lasting quality. During my stay in Cuyabia the villagers sold posts to two of their neighbouring cattle ranches, Santa Rita and Los Lazos. Every week that the ranches have the capacity to bring the villagers back and forth, which was roughly twice a month during my stay in the village, two groups from the community settle for four or five days in the forest to make posts from *Palo Santo*. One group works for the ranch Santa Rita, and the other for Los Lazos. A tractor from each ranch comes to pick up the group to bring them into the forest where the Palo Santo is, which is a long way from where the village is located. The groups consist mainly of men, but a couple of women and their children always come along to cook for their husbands/fathers. They bring water for cooking, drinking and bathing, food, as rice and spaghetti, chainsaws, mattresses, mosquito nets, tarpaulins roofs, and ropes to fasten the tarpaulins and mosquito nets in the trees. The groups usually stay in the forest for a few days before the tractors come to pick them up with the posts they have sawed, which is usually about 200 from each group, depending on how many there are and how many chainsaws they have.

A Saturday afternoon, when the sun is about to set, I sit in front of the bonfire outside Unine's house when the tractor from Santa Rita arrives with the workers from the community on its way back to the ranch with the posts, and I find it appropriate to ask Unine how much the ranches pay for each post. Unine explains that the two ranches pay differently, *"Santa Rita pays 5000 guaranies[36] per post, and Los Lazos pays 5500[37] each."* Even though 500 guaranies[38] is not a great amount of money, it makes a significant difference when the villagers sell roughly 200 posts per round to the ranches. I ask

[35] Palo Santo (Bulnesia sarimentoí) is a species at risk to get extinguished, and is thereby preserved in Paraguay. Palo Santo is a requested as timber because of its hardwood, and for several medical purposes such as the bark used in tea and *mate* against cold and the liquid of Palo Santo to reduce muscular pain.

[36] US$ 1.15
[37] US$ 1.265
[38] US$ 0.115

Unine why they do not sell all their posts to the ranch that gives the best price. Unine thinks for a while, and shrugs before he answers: *"I do not know why. Everyone wants posts!"*

Later that evening, I ask Jose the same question that I asked Unine. Jose came back from the forest that afternoon with the tractor from Santa Rita, the ranch that pays the least amount of money for the posts. Jose answers that he prefers to work for Santa Rita even though they pay less because he receives payment for the posts the same day as the tractor picks up the workers and the posts in the forest, and the ranch deliver food and other necessities every week. *"Los Lazos only pays for the posts and delivers food and other necessities once every month,"* he adds before he emphasizes *"that is the reason why I prefer to work at Santa Rita."*

From these statements, I conclude that Jose has thought about the different options the ranches offer, and has decided that short-term return is more valuable to him than to maximize the income. As the making of posts is neither a traditional nor a sustainable use of the forest, it is not in coherence with the *plan de manejo forestal* project. I will further illustrate how the villagers perceive the future, and how their perception of the future differs from Alter Vida's long-term perspective. I argue that their different perceptions of the future are reflected by the way they act in the present (Persoon and Perez 2008). The Alter Vida representatives aim to conserve the forest in a long-term perspective. The villagers, on the other hand, are more concerned about the present.

A week later I sit outside of Jose's house, drinking *tereré* and chatting with him and his wife, while most of the villagers are gathered around the volleyball field, watching and playing game after game of volleyball. It is Sunday afternoon, and Jose, his wife and a few other villagers came back to the community the day before with the tractor from Santa Rita, after spending another week in the forest making posts.

I am surprised by the amount of posts the villagers are extracting from their forest, and ask Jose and his wife if they worry that the *Palo Santo* will become extinct from the land of Cuyabia with this large extraction rate. Jose thinks for a couple of seconds while he sips the tereré, laughs and then answers that he is not worried. I am about to ask why,

when he says: *"the Ayoreo[39] do not worry about the future. Maybe for you this is weird, but Ayoreo think about earning enough money to buy food for our family today and the rest of the week, and we do not think of what will happen next month or next year."*

Immediate Return Economy

José´s statement above corresponds with the immediate return reasoning that characterizes hunters and gatherers (Woodburn 1982). As hunters and gatherers, the Ayoreo found everything they needed to survive in the forest, and when they did not, they moved their settlement somewhere else. Saving and accumulating do not characterize an immediate return economy. The Ayoreo did not have to save anything for consumption later, and therefore, there was no need for a long-term perspective (Woodburn 1982; von Bremen 2000; Howell 2011). The eldest generation in Cuyabia were born and raised in the forest as hunters and gatherers. When they were removed from the forest by missionaries and placed in missionary stations, they started to work at the mission stations, for the Mennonites and later also at cattle ranches that expanded in the Chaco region. As wage labourers, the work the Ayoreo population did, and still does, is destined directly to the returns (von Bremen 2000: 276-281). The sale of posts gives the villagers in Cuyabia an immediate return from their labour. I suggest that their background as hunters and gatherers, and the wage labour with the focus on the returns, is still present in their present economic situation. During my stay in the village, the sale of posts was the activity that provided the villagers with an immediate return from their labour.

Immediate Consumption

As saving and accumulation is not characteristic of the immediate return reasoning, the immediate return economy cause an immediate consumption. I was surprised by the amount of crackers, caramels and chewing gums the inhabitants bought from the little shop at the ranch Santa Rita or at the supermarket in Mariscal Estigarribia each time they got their wages from the ranches. I was even more surprised by the short amount of time it took them to consume all these goods. It was not unusual that a family could

[39] Most of the villagers use this term Ayoreo when they explain me something about themselves.

eat crackers and caramels instead of cooking for a whole day. The next day usually all the sweets were consumed. The economy of the inhabitants of Cuyabia fits into the description Howell (2011) gives of the immediate-return subsistence economy that characterizes the Chewong in Malaysia. Their economy is extended into an "immediate-consumption" economic practice, which makes accumulation of wealth difficult when individuals start to earn cash from wage labour in a short-term cycle (Howell 2011: 97).

Dreams About the Future

The villagers have a short-term perspective on consumer goods attune with their collective attitude toward work. Nevertheless, I sometimes had the impression that they do in fact take the future into consideration; several of my informants expressed their dream to have a school and a church in the community. I had reoccurring conversations with various villagers, both women and men, in regard to the concept of the future. The topic focused mainly on infrastructure, such as more houses, private water wells attached to each household, ownership to land and a school and a church. The villagers are used to receiving financing for projects to build houses, water wells and other investments in infrastructure, either from the local authorities or NGOs. Also Unine's scooter, one of the rifles and the radio they use to communicate with other communities have all been donated by either INDI, the local government or NGOs. I suggest that these projects contribute to maintaining the immediate consumption economy in Cuyabia, because the villagers do not have to think about saving their wages to invest in infrastructure, because the villagers do not have to save money nor invest in infrastructure. Thus, they are accustomed to outsiders taking care of improving the infrastructure by implementing aid projects, which makes them depend on these projects fulfilled by the government.

Although most of the villagers seem to have a short-term economic perspective, I claim that there are a few exceptions from the immediate-consumption economic practice. Both Nicolas and José were dreaming about a better existence, and they expressed their desire raise their standard of living by saving their wage and gradually investing in their households. Both of them bought their own scooters from the ranch Los Lazos during my stay in Cuyabia. José bought a used one from one of the other workers at the ranch,

and Nicolas bought a bigger and nicer one from the ranch administration. Nicolas could not afford to pay for the scooter all at once, and had to pay deduction from his salary every month. Nicolas bought the scooter with a business idea in mind; he could easily get to Mariscal Estigarribia, where he could buy batteries, caramels and other sweets that he could sell with profit in the community. When I left Cuyabia, Nicolas had still not put his business idea into practice. Nicolas and José were the only ones that indicated that they wanted to increase their standard of living by investing their money in anything else than consumption goods. Nevertheless, the economy is basically based on immediate consumption, and a short-term perspective, as I illustrate throughout this chapter. I suggest that the immediate consumption mentality and the short-term perspective contradict the *plan de manejo forestal* project. I will further illustrate the villagers' short-term perspective regarding the future by giving some empirical examples.

A sense of time

Late one afternoon when everyone in the village is all gathered on the road outside the community waiting for Unine to come back from hunting, suspecting that he has lost his way in the forest due to a suddenly cloudy sky, Nicolas asks me *"Why does Chala[40] want to conserve the forest for as long as five years[41]?"* I answer with a question: *"Do you think that five years is a long or a short period of time for the project?"* He exclaims that he thinks that five years is a very long time. But then adds that it might be a good thing, because then they will save a part of the forest that they can use in five years.

On a monitoring trip with Alter Vida and some of the villagers in May on the lands of Cuyabia, we stop close to a small lake that makes it impossible to pass further to the other side of the land of Cuyabia during summertime. The road goes from the "main road" by the entrance of Los Lazos, and passes Cuyabia's community field a few hundred metres before arriving at the lake. We had been there with the NGO about three weeks earlier, and since then the amount of water in the lake has sunken by at least one meter. I exclaim that I am surprised by the amount of water that has disappeared in such a

[40] When the villagers refer to the NGO, they always use the name of the NGOs main contact in the village, and not the name of the NGO.
[41] The project has a duration of five years, with a possibility to be extended.

short time, and ask Unine if the same thing is happening to the pond from where the community gets its water. He tells me that both the lake and the pond will dry up during the drought in wintertime. *"In the pond the water will last until August or September, and then it will dry up,"* he explains. I ask, a bit worried, from where the community then will get its water. Unine laughs and answers that he does not know, that it is still a long time left until August.

These empirical examples illustrate that the villagers have a perception of time, the months of the year and the future. What is clear is that they do not seem to take the future into consideration. To them, the future seems to appear as something blurry, still far away that is not necessary to take into consideration. I suggest that their view on the future is grounded in their background as hunters and gatherers, who have an immediate return view on life. The future is not taken into consideration when it comes to payment for services and use of resources. Cutting down the forest is more attractive than conserving it, due to the immediate return.

Based on these empirical examples I suggest that Alter Vida and the villagers have different expectations of the forest project. They have different *imaginations* of the future (Crapanzano 2004; West 2006). The Alter Vida representatives imagine that by the implementation of the forest project they will help the community to conserve the forest in a long-term perspective, through a sustainable use of the forest. The villagers, on the other hand, do not appear to have the same long-term perspective as Alter Vida. Cuyabia share the same situation as many in rural Paraguay: at the same time as deforestation is affecting the life and has worsened the situation, it is more important for them to get enough food for the day, than to worry about climate change and forest conservation (Reed 1995). Hence, Cuyabia and Alter Vida have two different expectations of the forest project; Alter Vida imagine Cuyabia as living sustainably in a traditional way, as they did in the past, while the villagers in Cuyabia imagine development, as getting a pickup and other kinds of modern things. Alter Vida has a long-term perspective based on the villagers imaginary past as "Ecologically Noble Savages," while the villagers have a short-term perspective, based on their immediate return economy. The sale of posts to the ranches does not fit into the sustainable development project that Alter Vida was about to implement in the village. As long as

the villagers have short-term opportunities available to earn money, with an immediate return focus in mind, they take advantage of these opportunities. Then, there is a great possibility that a conservation project, based on local knowledge and a sustainable use, will have difficulties succeeding.

Risking a Conflict

On several occasions when the two administrators from Los Lazos observed that Cuyabia also delivered posts to the other ranches in the area, they claimed that they had helped Cuyabia since the villagers arrived a year before. Hence, they expected the village to deliver posts exclusively to them, which they did not.

One early afternoon, one of the administrators at the ranch Los Lazos, stops on the road outside the village. I hear his loud and angry voice from one of the elder couples' house on the other side of the village. I am curious about what is going on, as are most of the villagers, so I walk down to the road where the administrator is sitting in his white pickup, surrounded by almost the entire village, with Unine in front. The administrator questions Unine why he is selling *his* posts to the other ranchers. Apparently he had observed the tractor from Santa Rita loaded with posts from Cuyabia the day before. Unine defends himself by claiming that the posts Santa Rita was picking up the day before was not from the area where they extract posts to Los Lazos. Unine adds that next week he has a group ready to work for Los Lazos. The administrator seems to be satisfied with Unine's answer, and says that he will send a tractor to extract posts next week. Then he adds: *"Los Lazos has helped Cuyabia a lot. We have helped you with all these things. You should deliver posts only to us. We need all the posts." "That is ok,"* Unine says without much expression on his face. The administrator does not seem to be satisfied with Unine's answer, and reproaches him by saying: *"When you do not have money, you can only ask, and we pay you in advance. Last week the ingeniero brought you a new chainsaw from Asunción, without any extra costs, and you do not pay any extra for the food you order. Isn't that right, Unine?"* Unine nods, and assures the administrator that next week they will make posts for Los Lazos. The administrator drives back in the direction he came from. As long as Unine had offers from other ranches, that returned

their labour faster than Los Lazos, he delivered to these ranchers, even though he put his future relation with Los Lazos at risk.

In a patron-client relationship, the patron supplies the client with economic aid and protection, and the client in return is loyal to his patron (Wolf 1966). Even though the relations between the villagers and the ranchers cannot fully be characterized as a patron-client relationship, the villagers in Cuyabia are more dependent on the ranchers than what the Guaraní that Reed (1995; 1997) depicts, who earn cash through commercial extraction of *yerba mate*[42] without becoming tied to Paraguayan patrons. The inhabitants of Cuyabia, on the other side, depend on the ranchers to earn cash, and do not have any other work opportunities near the village. As the empirical example show, the villagers do not always act upon this loyalty, neither do the ranch give economic aid without getting labour in return, as depicted in the previous chapter. At the same time, the relationship between the ranch administrators and the villagers is not neutral; it is one where the ranch administrators have the power (Wolf 1966).

From what I have outlined, I suggest that the villagers act in a social interface with the ranch administrators (Long 1989). In the interface, the ranch administrators are the ones in power (Long 1989: 2). For the villagers, the immediate return from their labour seems to be more valuable than to keep their word with the ranchers. If a conflict arises, the villagers have everything to lose, as they depend on the ranchers to earn money. Also, the ranchers, by demanding large amounts of posts from Cuyabia, contribute to the degradation of Cuyabia's forest. Hence, I claim that the ranchers have an impact on Alter Vida's forest project, as they influence on the villagers use of the forest by buying posts, at the same time as they are deforesting their own properties that surround the land of Cuyabia.

An Irregular Work-Pattern

I suggest that the irregular work-pattern that is characteristic of immediate return societies, or original affluent societies in the terms of Sahlins (2004), is still present among the Ayoreo living in Cuyabia (Sahlins 2004). The work of extracting posts for the

[42] The herbs for *tereré/mate.*

ranches in the area is discontinuous, partly because the workers from the village depend on transportation from the ranches. At times it is more profitable for the ranches to use their tractors for other types of work than to transport the posts extracted by the workers from Cuyabia, and to transport the workers back and forth between the community and the forest. Weeks could go by without the workers from Cuyabia extracting posts for the ranches. As long as the villagers in Cuyabia have enough food, the lack of work did not seem to bother them. While not working for the ranches, they spent time working on their houses, in the field in the community or playing volleyball and spending time with their family around the bonfire.

The irregular work pattern of the villagers in Cuyabia corresponds to Sahlins' proposition that hunters and gatherers do not work hard. When hunters and gatherers have procured what they need, they stop working, which signifies that they do not work continuously. They erratically accomplish what they need for their subsistence economy, and the work pattern is correspondingly irregular (Sahlins 2004: 17). Next, I will demonstrate that the image of the villagers in Cuyabia among the ranchers matches with Sahlins' claim that hunters and gatherers have an irregular work pattern. Even though the villagers have not lived as hunters and gatherers for many years, features from their former life as hunters and gatherers are still present, as part of their immediate-return economy.

Hard work?

Once, while hiking to the nearest town Mariscal Estigarribia with several of the workers from Los Lazos, I ask the administrators why the villagers get paid for the amount of posts they deliver and the amount of piles of already felled trees, and not a monthly salary as the other workers at Los Lazos. One of the administrators explains to me that the villagers have a different work rhythm than the other workers at Los Lazos. *"These people work slower, which is something that we at Los Lazos have to respect, because that is their way of life,"* he claims, and continues: *"Therefore it is not profitable to pay them daily, weekly or monthly, but by the amount of work they do."* A few days later I had a similar conversation with the administrator of Santa Rita, on the tractor on the way back to the community after I had accompanied some of the villagers from Cuyabia that were

going to spend a few days extracting posts in the forest, on the other side of the property of Cuyabia. The administrator asserts that the villagers are trustful, and if something has been done the wrong way, they always do it right the second time. I ask him if the villagers work as hard as the rest of the workers at Santa Rita. The administrator says that they work slower. *"They have a different mentality,"* he adds. I ask if that is the reason why they do not get paid daily, weekly or monthly. "*Yes,"* he confirms, and continues: *"if they get paid per hour or per day, they sit down without doing anything."* The two administrators' statements coincide with a characteristic of hunter and gatherers, which is that they seem to under use their objective economic possibilities, rather than strive to the limits of available labour and disposable resources, as is a characteristic of capitalism (Sahlins 2004: 17). I will further demonstrate that this might be the case among the villagers of Cuyabia by an empirical example from the work at Los Lazos.

When I spent a week working at Los Lazos with eight of the inhabitants of Cuyabia, our work task was to set fire to the piles of felled trees with gasoline and matches. The piles of felled trees laid one after the other on the deforested patches that next year would be grazing land for cattle. The villagers were paid 1500 Guaranies[43] for each pile they burned down. Every morning we woke up about the same time as the sun rose around seven o'clock. We sat around the bonfire, keeping ourselves warm in the chilly winter morning, drinking coffee and eating crackers for breakfast. We could sit for hours by the bonfire in the morning before we begun to work. The villagers did not want to work before the sun was high on the sky, and had warmed up the chilly winter air. It was also harder to put fire on the piles of trees early in the morning, because of the dew that covered the leaves and the grass after the chilly nights. After working for a couple of hours it was time to head back to the camp for lunch. Some days we did not get back to work after lunch, some days we did. In the middle of the day it was too hot to work in the sun.

The work habits the villagers had at Los Lazos fits into the explanation Sahlins (2004) gives of the hunters and gatherers, who do not maximize their labour forces. This is a contrast to the profit-directed western way of thinking, which is characterized by an

[43] US$ 0.345

interpretation of time as valuable, and thereby as something that "must be used" (Novellino 2007: 98). I suggest that the ranchers understand the villagers as indolent because the villagers do not use their time in a way that the ranchers perceive as efficient.

A Clash of Values

During my stay in Cuyabia, two of the families bought scooters from the cattle ranches, and several bought fancy mobile phones, either in the closest town, or used ones from the ranchers. Unine and his youngest daughter several times told me that they were going to buy a TV and a *motor* to watch movies, even though they did not have electricity or other recourses to use it. Both men and women in the community are interested in modern technology, and not donkeys and *karaguata* plantations. I suggest that the way the children in Cuyabia were playing reflects the desires and dreams of the villagers; when the children were running around in the village, they often made noises of the engine of a pickup, tractor or a truck. Sometimes they played with an old bicycle that was missing a tire, and pretended it was a scooter. At times they made the noise of a chainsaw as they were pretending to make posts, and in other occasions they pretended that they were *cowboys* looking after the cattle.

The villagers see that the owners of the cattle ranches arrive from the city either in their private jets or expensive pickups, and live in huge villas with a swimming pool outside and all their facilities inside. They see that the ones that work out on the grazing land on the horse back, despite being from poor peasant families from the south-eastern region of the country, wear nicer clothes and live better on the ranches with electricity and other facilities than they do in the community. They see that they can make more money from cattle ranching than they can from the forest, and are told the same thing from the cattle ranchers every day.

A clash of values exists between the Alter Vida representatives and the villagers. Alter Vida has an idea of what the villagers need, based on an image they have of the villagers as "the forest people" that desire a traditional way of life in the forest. From the empirical examples in this chapter, I conclude that the villagers want to participate in

the same technological development as the rest of the Paraguayan society. Further, I argue that, by participating in the *plan de manejo forestal* project, the villagers in Cuyabia and the Alter Vida representatives interact in a middle ground (Conklin and Graham 1995). Each of them wants their piece of the pie, but their goals from the project do not coincide.

Concluding remarks

To understand Cuyabia and Alter Vida's different expectations to the forest project, I suggest that it is necessary to take both the history and the future into consideration. Hence, in this chapter I have tried to illustrate how the villagers' perception of time differs from the long-term perspective Alter Vida bases the *plan de manejo forestal* project on. Through empirical examples I have argued that the villagers' background as hunters and gatherers, with an immediate return economy, lays the foundation of their short-term perspective. Although only the eldest generation has lived as hunters and gatherers, the short-term perspective is maintained through wage labour directed exclusively towards the returns. As saving and accumulation is not a characteristic of an immediate return economy, the immediate return encourages an immediate consumption. Further, I have suggested that the support local authorities and NGOs give by investing in infrastructure in the village; contribute to maintain the immediate return and immediate consumption economy, as the villagers do not have to invest in infrastructure themselves. Hence, based on these illustrations I suggest that the villagers in Cuyabia do not seem to take the future into consideration in a long-term perspective. I have argued that the way the villagers and the Alter Vida representatives perceive the future affect the way they act in the present. Thus, while Alter Vida wants to conserve both the forest and the image they have of the villagers as "the forest people" through a sustainable use in a long-term perspective based on the traditional knowledge of the villagers, the villagers themselves want to participate in the economic and technological development. While Alter Vida has a long-term perspective on the future, the villagers in Cuyabia do not seem to take the future much into consideration, which, as I suggest, affect the way they act in the present. Thus, their views on the future affect their expectations from the forest project.

Secondly, I have depicted the ranchers' interaction with the villagers, as I claim that they affect the everyday life in Cuyabia. I suggest that the ranchers' great demand of posts from the villagers affect the villagers' use of the forest. Hence, as the extraction of posts is not a sustainable use of the forest in the light of the forest project, the ranchers affect Alter Vida's forest project. As the sale of posts gives the villagers an immediate return from their labour, they see the activity as the most profitable work activity. Hence, I suggest that the immediate return economy may lead to challenges in the implementation of the forest project.

Chapter VI: The land of Cuyabia

"It is no contradiction to say that "owning land" is equivalent to owning oneself," wrote Mario Halley (1985: 12) of the Paraguayan land reform. Owning land, he went on, is to value one´s own labour, to confide in one´s own foundation, to build that which dignifies human life: house, family, plantation, harvest, bread, peace, love, unity and dominion" (Hetherington 2008: 51).

Towards the end of my fieldwork a conflict regarding the land of Cuyabia emerged. During my stay in Cuyabia, both the Alter Vida representatives and the villagers several times told me that two *Paraguayans* occupied a part of the land of Cuyabia when the villagers moved to the area in August 2010. The two *Paraguayans* had told the Alter Vida representatives that they were looking after the land that belonged to their *patron* in Asunción. Both the representatives from the local government, and the NGOs that participated in the resettlement, as well as the villagers themselves, were convinced that this *patron* did not own the land the two Paraguayans were occupying, and that if the two men did not leave by themselves, they would have to be removed at some point. They were not exploiting the forest, and were not seen as a threat, the Alter Vida representatives told me. Towards the end of my stay in Cuyabia the situation changed, and the two men claimed that their *patron* has a title to the land they were occupying, and refused to allow the villagers to exploit the land that consists of 4800 hectares. When the conflict emerged, all other concerns regarding the *plan de manejo forestal* project were put aside, and both the villagers and Alter Vida focused on the land situation in the community.

As depicted in the introduction chapter, Paraguay has one of the most unequal land distributions in the world. Hence, the land tenure issue in the country is particularly precarious (Duckworth 2011; Hetherington 2009). The present situation of land tenure in Paraguay is a result of the history of land tenure in the country. The 35-year Stroessner dictatorship that ended in 1989 has particularly influenced the present situation, as was illustrated in the first chapter of this thesis.

To have a project approved by the Paraguayan government, either for deforesting the land or protecting the forest, a land title is required, the Alter Vida representatives informed me. Many of the indigenous communities and other marginalized people, such as the peasants, do not have a land title. Cuyabia is among those communities that are not in possession of a land title. What implications does the lack of land title have for Cuyabia? How does their "title-less" situation affect the implementation of Alter Vida´s forest project? These are important questions that I shall consider in this chapter. I will first depict the conflict that arose regarding the land of Cuyabia, before I discuss Cuyabia's lack of a land title. I will suggest that, based on the history of land tenure in Paraguay, Cuyabia is exposed to structural violence. When I left Cuyabia in mid-July, the conflict was still not resolved. I spent my two last weeks in Paraguay at Alter Vida's office in Asunción. Cuyabia's land conflict was a much-discussed topic among the Alter Vida representatives during these two weeks. Thus, I will end the chapter by highlighting Alter Vida's attempts to sort out the difficult situation in Cuyabia. The example illustrates the many uncertainties with respect to false documents and land tenure in Paraguay.

The Rise of a Conflict

One Sunday afternoon *the Paraguayan* that occupies a part of the land of Cuyabia pays the village a visit. He is seated with Jose and one of his sons, Riquelme, in the shadow behind Unine´s house, drinking *tereré*. When I discover that he is present in the community, I join them. *The Paraguayan* talks non-stop with a vociferous voice. A smell of *caña*[44] surrounds him. His son is also present, and is already playing football with the other kids. *The Paraguayan* claims that according to his *patron*, the land of Cuyabia goes from the road outside the community and in the other direction from where he lives. The 4800 hectares on the other side of the road, where he has lived for the last 7 or 8 years, belongs to his *patron*. Jose says that it cannot be true, that the land he occupies is part of the 14 000 hectares that belong to Cuyabia. Then *the Paraguayan* claims that he was there long before the Ayoreo. I cannot restrain myself, and say that the land belongs to the Ayoreo population, whether they live there or not. *The Paraguayan* states that he has a copy of the document that says that the land belongs to his *patron*. He asks Jose if

[44] Caña is a liquor extracted from sugarcane.

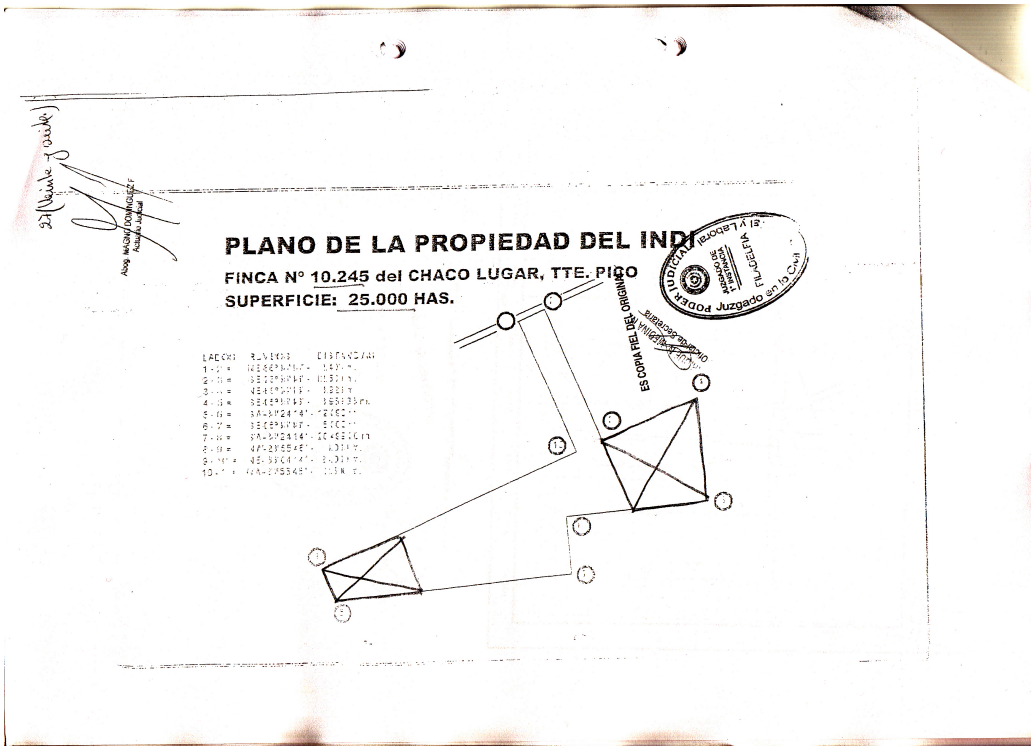
he wants to see it. He says yes, and adds that he can bring the document the next time he comes to the village. *The Paraguayan* stays in the community all afternoon playing volleyball with the villagers.

Jose tells Unine about the incident, that the Paraguayan said that his *patron* has a title to the land he occupies. Unine says confidently that it is not true; he does not have the documentation. Unine continues: *"Chala says that INDI will have "el reconocimiento del líder[45]" ready this week. In three months the juridical paper will be done, and in two years Cuyabia will have its land title."* According to Unine, two years of waiting to receive the land title it is a short amount if time; Chala has told him that some communities have to wait for 10 years to obtain their land title.

Unine asks more about what *the Paraguayan* wanted. Jose answers that *the Paraguayan* claimed that he has a copy of a document that confirms that his *patron* is the owner of the land he is occupying. Unine is convinced that *the Paraguayan* is not telling the truth; according to the local authorities no one but INDI has ownership to the land. Unine says that a Paraguayan recently bought 5000 hectares of land not far from Los Lazos and *Picada 108*, a road on the other side of Los Lazos. On this land there is a lot of *Palo Santo*, Unine continues. *"The Paraguayan apparently has a lot of money, and that is why he obtained the land title in a swift."* Unine uses his forefinger to draw a map on the dusty ground; he outlines the road that goes through the land of Cuyabia, into the property of Los Lazos, and ends up at the road *Picada 108*. He maps the land of Los Lazos, and the land that the wealthy Paraguayan just bought, at the same time he explains to us the different sites on the map. Then he indicates on the "map" where the villagers chop timber for the ranches, which he claims is from the 5000 hectares that the local authorities will transfer to Cuyabia, that is still not their land. Then he says*: "We will not touch the 14 000 hectares that are included in the forest project, because we do not want to get into any trouble." "What kind of trouble?"* I ask. *"Problems with the project and the government. I have to keep my word, and not touch the forest,"* Unine answers.

[45] *El reconocimiento del líder* is a document that approves the election of the leader in an indigenous community.

Two of the villagers in a discussion with the Paraguayan that occupy a part of Cuyabia's land.



A map of the land of Cuyabia. The drawn up areas are the 11 000 hectares that Cuyabia has lost.

"Insecure tenure may in itself promote deforestation; and without secure tenure resource users have little incentive to protect trees and forest clearance is often a way of showing occupation" (Bond et. al 2010: 23; see also Cotula and Mayers 2009).

Unine seems to legitimate the chopping of Palo Santo by extracting it only from the 5000 hectares he says the local authorities has told him they will transmit to Cuyabia. By extracting from land that is not part of the 14 000 hectares that at the time belongs to Cuyabia and takes part of the project, he still fulfils his word – not cutting down the forest. At the same time he seems to understand that there is an error in his logic, because he does not tell the Alter Vida representatives about the extraction of posts for sale to the ranches.

The next morning, sitting by the bonfire drinking his sweet morning coffee, Jose expresses his worries about the incident from the day before: *"I could not sleep, and stayed up all night pondering about what the Paraguayan said."* Then he adds, while his face is covered with concerns: *"Imagine if the land does not belong to Cuyabia after all?"* Later that day, the administrator of the ranch Santa Rita, comes by with last week´s payment for the timber the villagers delivered to the ranch. We ask him for a ride to where *the Paraguayan* and his companion live, which is on the way to Santa Rita. When Jose, his wife and I arrive at the house of *the Paraguayan* and his companion, we all shake hands, and *the Paraguayan* asks if we came to see the document. He enters the small house they have constructed from woods in the forest, and a few seconds later he comes back and hands over the document to Jose. Jose passes it over to me, and asks me if I can read it. I read the document for Jose and his wife. It says that the owner of the land that consists of 4800 hectares is Ramon Villanueva, with a middle name that I do not remember. The document was signed in 2007. I ask *the Paraguayan* if I can take a picture of the document, which is a bad photocopy with the logo of INDERT (the Rural Development and Land Institute) in the left corner. His companion says clearly *"No."* The two say that they are only employees, and have not got anything to do with the land issue. Jose says that he understands, that he only wants to know whom the land belongs to. Back in the community, Jose tells Unine that *the Paraguayan* displayed the document to us. Unine is convinced that the document is false.

Saturday evening, about a week later, everyone is gathered around the bonfire outside of Jose´s house after half of the inhabitants have spent the week in the forest, chopping timber for the cattle ranches. The discussion goes diligently. Unine uses his forefinger to draw a map of Cuyabia on the dusty ground in the light from the bonfire, which he always does while discussing the land issue. Everyone´s eyes follow his finger, while he explains the map and states his worries about the situation. All the villagers, both women and men seem to have a lot to say about the subject. Jose explains to me that the community from time to time chop *Quebracho Blanco*[46] from the other side of the road, the land that *the Paraguayan* claims that belong to his *patron*. They use the wood to construct walls on their houses, to make chairs to sit on and other things they need for their houses. Now, *the Paraguayan* has prohibited them from touching any of the trees on that side of the road. I ask Jose what they will do about this prohibition. He tells me that they will not touch a tree until they know more about the situation, because they do not want to get into any trouble.

In the following days Unine calls the local authorities' office in Filadelfia and the Alter Vida office in Asunción daily to update them on the situation. Unine tells me that Alter Vida and the local authorities will help Cuyabia to sort out the situation. *"They will contact INDI and find out if the Paraguayan have a land title or not,"* Unine explains to me.

The Process Towards a Land Title

There are several criterions that the indigenous communities must complete before they can obtain a land title. A legal recognition is required before the community can apply for a land title. Before the community can obtain legal recognition, detailed conditions have to be fulfilled (Stunnenberg 1993: 109). First, the community must elect a leader, and the election has to be recognized by INDI. When the community has received a document from INDI that legitimizes the leader's legal position, they can apply for legal recognition. In Cuyabia, Unine was elected as leader in January 2011. They received the recognition of the leader towards the end of my stay in the village, a process that took approximately three months. A representative from INDI came to the community to get

[46] A tree species common in the Chaco region of Paraguay.

the names, sexes and ages of all the villagers. In addition, information on the geographical location occupied by the community, and other data requested to get the legal recognition (Stunnenberg 1993: 109). Unine and the Alter Vida representatives emphasized that the process might last for years, due to the low work capacity at INDI. Once the community is granted legal recognition, it is registered in the central registry and the leader must address himself to INDI to submit a request for the piece of land that belongs to the community. INDI is in charge of enacting the whole process. When the request is approved by INDI, the land is inspected before it finally is transferred to the community without cost. Although an Indigenous community has become the legal owner of the land, they are not allowed to sell the land or use it as a security to obtain credit (Stunnenberg 1993: 109).

Documents

So far, I have introduced the conflict regarding the land of Cuyabia and I have depicted the process to obtain a land title for indigenous communities. As the coordinator of the *Plan de manejo forestal* project told me, the process to obtain a land title stagnates when there are several claimants to the same piece of land; no claim can be fulfilled until the situation as to who the rightful owner should be is sorted out. Due to the conflict, INDI could not document that Cuyabia is in the process of receiving a land title. Thereby, the Paraguayan government, due to the lack of a land title, cannot approve the project Plan de manejo forestal. As Hetherington claims, most documents exist by and for the elite, and are hard come by for the indigenous and peasant population (Hetherington 2008: 59).

Inspired by Sara Lund (2001), who claims that the Peruvian government controls the population by claiming identity papers for any kind of legal action in the country, I assert that the Paraguayan state controls the population through documentation by requiring a land title to do any kind of intervention on the land. Even though the case depicted by Lund (2001) is about identity papers, and the case of Cuyabia is about land titles, the two cases can be seen as a way the government controls its citizens by requiring documentation papers. The Peruvian citizens need national identity papers to get a job, own a property or receive an inheritance, enrol children in school, or take any

legal action. Likewise, the villagers of Cuyabia are not able to participate in any project without being in possession of a land title, and cannot receive a land title as long as disagreements regarding ownership of the land exist. Lund claims that the citizens that do not have identity papers are excluded from the national society, by being prohibited from participating in many arenas (Lund 2002). I suggest that the indigenous population in Paraguay that do not possess a land title are excluded from the national land tenure system, and are in danger of losing their land. As Hetherington claims, "The papers are themselves the rights, and poverty is what keeps most people from acquiring them" (Hetherington 2009: 235). Thereby, the state controls the citizens, and the ones not recognized by the legal system (Lund 2001: 4-5). In the same way the Peruvian government requires several types of documents, as birth certificates, the parents' medical attests and identity documents to issue national identity documents, the Paraguayan state requires several documents, such as the recognition of leader and the legal recognition to grant an indigenous community a land title (Lund 2001: 9). By not having the necessary documents, the Peruvians are excluded from many parts of the Peruvian society, in the same way as the inhabitants of Cuyabia are kept out of various happenings, participating in the forest project, due to their lack of land title. Thereby, the government excludes the poor and marginalized people from the public goods.

As depicted in the introduction chapter, Paraguay has a solid legal framework regarding indigenous rights. Nevertheless, INDI, which was founded to protect and promote the indigenous peoples rights, has promoted the integration of the country's resources into the market economy, and thereby favoured rich landowners and the dominant groups in the Paraguayan society (Blaser 2004: 56-57; Documento Nacional 2011). The latest indigenous census, conducted in 2002, informed that 185 indigenous communities of the total of 412 had not resolved the situation of land possession, either because their land was owned by someone else, or because they had not achieved the legal recognition (Documento Nacional 2011, 10). According to INDI´s strategic plan concerning the period from 2010 to 2013, 90 % of the indigenous population in Paraguay will by the end of that period live in communities that have a land title (INDI 2012). Considering the situation of Cuyabia, I suggest that INDI will have difficulties in achieving its goal. As I outlined in the introduction chapter, and as I will come back to towards the end of this

chapter, the Alter Vida representatives claimed that INDI most likely began to sell parts of the land that belong to Cuyabia while the villagers had still not occupied the land.

Structural Violence

I suggest that by selling the land that was bought to give back to the Ayoreo group, and simultaneously requiring a land title to approve a forest project like the *Plan de manejo forestal*, Cuyabia is exposed to structural violence. As long as a conflict exists regarding whom the land belongs to, it will be difficult for Cuyabia to obtain a land title. The term 'structural violence' dates back to Johan Galtung (1969). Farmer defines structural violence as:

"Violence exerted systematically – that is, indirectly – by everyone who belongs to a certain social order: hence the discomfort these ideas provoke in a moral economy still geared to pinning praise or blame on individual actors" (Farmer 2004:307).

Farmer used the term structural violence in his analysis of the poor and marginalized population and their lack of health care in Haiti. Haiti is geographically distanced from Paraguay. Nevertheless, as Næsse (2009) points out: "Haiti's history of colonialism and dictatorships, it's a small and very rich elite and a large amount of people living in poverty, makes it adequate for comparison with Paraguay in the comprehension of 'structural violence'" (Næsse 2009: 25). Farmer (2004: 309) claims that a historically deep and geographically broad analysis taking the political economy into consideration is necessary to understand structural violence. I suggest that the history of land tenure and especially the land tenure policy during the 35 years of Stroessner's dictatorship, as I depicted in the first chapter, have affected the conflict that arose regarding the land of Cuyabia towards the end of my fieldwork. When taking the history into consideration one can question whether structural violence is performed knowingly (Næsse 2009: 25). Bourgois and Sheper-Hughes, among others, have criticized Farmer for being too disperse in his use of the term 'structural violence'. They claim that the concept must be elaborated, complicated and diversified (Bourgois and Sheper-Hughes in Farmer 2004: 318). Still, I find the term 'structural violence' convenient in my attempt to depict the conflict regarding Cuyabia's land, which I find complex and confusing, as it seems to be a

result of years of corrupt land tenure politics. There were many uncertainties regarding the whole situation, both among the villagers, the Alter Vida representatives and the local authorities. When I left Cuyabia in mid-July, the conflict regarding their land was still the main topic of conversation in the village. The villagers were concerned about losing their land, and as the village is located far away from the capital Asunción, they were not able to contact INDI and other government institutions to find out more about the situation of the land. Therefore, Unine called Alter Vida and the local authorities almost daily, to get an update on the situation. As I spent the two last weeks of my fieldwork in Asunción, I was able to follow the discussion about the conflict at Alter Vida's office, where the conflict regarding Cuyabia's land also was the main topic of conversation. Therefore, I will further depict how the conflict was understood and debated among the Alter Vida representatives, and illustrate their role in Cuyabia's land conflict.

Back in Asunción

Much attention was given to Cuyabia's land situation at Alter Vida's office in Asunción. Since a land title is required in order to have a forest projects approved by INFONA (The National Forest Institute), Alter Vida had made an agreement with INFONA. As Monica explained regarding the land titles; if some of the communities participating in the project do not have a land title, a document from INDI confirming that the community is in the process of receiving their land title, will be sufficient to have the projects validated by INFONA. She went on to say that INFONA was enthusiastic about the *plan de manejo forestal* project, because of the high deforestation rate in the Chaco, and the fact that almost all the projects that INFONA approve are *Planes de uso de tierra* for the ranches that deforest their land in advantage of grazing land for their cattle. After the conflict regarding Cuyabia's land had emerged, however, INDI could not produce a document stating that Cuyabia is in the process of receiving their land title, and thereby uncertainties existed whether the project could be implemented in Cuyabia or not.

On my first day back in Asunción, Alter Vida's lawyer informs me that the prospects for the forest project in Cuyabia are not good. *"It is possible that the project is not executable in Cuyabia because of the uncertainties regarding who actually owns the land,"* she says.

This is the information she has from INDI. *"It is not possible to do inversion as long as the community does not have a land title. INDI has to approve that the community is in the process of getting their land title, which is not possible as long a conflict exists regarding who owns the land,"* she states.

Later that day, I have a conversation with Alter Vida's coordinator. *"The case of the land of Cuyabia is very complicated. First it consisted of 25 000 hectares, then it was clear that they only had 14 000 hectares left. Now there are doubts about who is the owner of the land, it might not even be INDI. We have to do the "Plan de manejo forestal" with all the land that belongs to Cuyabia, not just a part of it. The situation is very complicated. This conflict is an example of how land is removed from the indigenous population in this country." "It is not fair,"* he adds.

Monica has a more positive view of the situation: *"I told our lawyer that I do not think that there will be a problem to get the necessary papers from INDI to have the project validated by INFONA, because the project is not an invention of the land, it will not make any changes in the landscape, and INDI that still is the owner of the land has to approve."*

These three conversations indicate the complex and diffuse land tenure situation in Paraguay. Alter Vida was trying to sort out the difficult situation of Cuyabia´s land. A few days later, in another conversation with the coordinator, he told me that Alter Vida had, on behalf of Cuyabia, requested all information about the land of the community from INDI. INDI had replied that Cuyabia´s land is in litigation, because various titles claiming the ownership of the land had appeared. The coordinator continues to explain that INDI has confirmed that they bought 25 000 hectares to transfer to the indigenous people, and that the title is still in INDI´s name, and has not been transferred to Cuyabia yet. At the same time, other actors appear and claim that a part of Cuyabia's land belongs to them. According to the coordinator of Alter Vida, INDI bought the land in 1983, and lately other titles to the same land have appeared. *"Most likely INDI started to sell the land that was meant for the indigenous people,"* he claims, before he adds: *"Until it is sorted out who owns Cuyabia´s land, the "Plan de manejo forestal" will not be approved."*

A Complex Legislation

As depicted earlier in this chapter, Unine called Alter Vida and the local authorities nearly every day after the conflict regarding Cuyabia's land arose. He reported new developments as the conflict grew, and Alter Vida and the local authorities tried to sort out the situation by requesting the necessary information from INDI. As Stunnenberg (1993) notes, one of the most important obstacles for the Indigenous communities in their attempts to purchase land, is the insufficient and often fragmented knowledge that the Indigenous population has with respect to their legal rights (Stunnenberg 1993: 242). The complexity of the legislation regarding indigenous rights leads to debates and misunderstandings relating to its actual meaning and content. As Stunnenberg notes, the legislation has been created by non-indigenous officials and is based on non-Indigenous concepts like "legal recognition" and "land title", which for the Indigenous peoples are sometimes hard to understand (Stunnenberg 1993: 242).

At meetings with the villagers in Cuyabia, Alter Vida several times explained the process of obtaining a land title. Alter Vida did all the necessary paper work and contacted INDI about the situation in Cuyabia. Although the intentions are good, I suggest that the image the Alter Vida representatives have of the villagers in Cuyabia as "the forest people" contributes to a process of undermining the abilities the villagers have to be potent political actors in the process of obtaining a land title.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I started to depict the conflict that was emerging regarding Cuyabia's land towards the end of my fieldwork. I have tried to illustrate the many uncertainties that arose around this conflict, which I have claimed is a result of the history of land tenure in Paraguay. Hence, I have suggested that Cuyabia, among other marginalized communities in Paraguay, is exposed to structural violence by not being able to obtain a land title due to the conflict regarding their land. Further, I have claimed that Cuyabia, among other indigenous and marginalized societies in Paraguay that are not in possession of a land title, are excluded from the national land title system, and hence are at risk of losing their land. As a land title is required for the implementation of a project, the prospects for Alter Vida's forest project are not good. Cuyabia is now in risk of not

being able to participate in the forest project, which paradoxically was supposed to contribute in the village's process towards obtaining a land title.

The second part of the chapter depicted how Alter Vida tried to sort out Cuyabia's land conflict. It was easier for them to contact the government regarding the land issue, than it was for the villagers in Cuyabia. Hence, I have suggested that Cuyabia remain dependent on others to sort out their situation. The aim of this chapter has been to illustrate the many uncertainties regarding Cuyabia's land situation. As Paraguay is one of the most unequal land distributions in the world, I suggest that Cuyabia is only one of many marginalized societies at risk of losing their land. The risk of losing their land was the villagers' biggest concern when I left Cuyabia.

Conclusion

This thesis has analysed the implementation of the *plan de manejo forestal* project in Cuyabia, and how the villagers act upon and respond to the project. I argue that the NGO Alter Vida bases the project on an image they have constructed of the villagers as "the forest people," which, as I have concluded, does not coincide with the everyday life in the village, as the villagers do not use the forest in a sustainable way. As I have claimed, Alter Vida is not alone in producing an image of Cuyabia as "the forest people." I have illustrated that the media, literature written about the Ayoreo, the late contact the Ayoreo had with the larger Paraguayan society, the fact that a group of Ayoreo still live in isolation, and that the villagers of Cuyabia have moved to the land of their ancestors, are all important factors that contribute to the image the Alter Vida representatives produce of the villagers of Cuyabia. Further, I have suggested that the indigenous legislation in Paraguay that characterizes the indigenous population as distinct, may contribute to the image Alter Vida produce of the villagers, as the indigenous peoples must satisfy certain requirements to benefit from the legislation. Another explanation might be that Alter Vida must ascribe the villagers of Cuyabia a symbolic value as "the forest people" to attract donors and financial support.

I have illustrated how Alter Vida bases the implementation of the forest project on the image of Cuyabia as "the forest people," by producing a stereotype of the villagers that does not coincide with their reality. Rather, I have suggested that the image fits into the *plan de manejo forestal* project. Hence, the Alter Vida representatives and the villagers have different expectations of the forest project. From my empirical findings, I conclude that Alter Vida wants to conserve the forest through a sustainable use, at the same time; they want to conserve the traditional lifestyle they imagine that the villagers seek by moving back to their ancestors land. The villagers, on the other hand, want modern things, such as mobile phones, electricity and a pickup, at the same time as they want to dependent less on the ranches and gain a legal land title.

In the analysis of how the villagers' expectations of the forest project differ from Alter Vida's expectations, I have tried to show the importance of taking the history and the

future into consideration. I have suggested that the different expectations of the villagers and the Alter Vida representatives may be explained by their different views and perceptions of the future. While Alter Vida bases the forest project on sustainable development through conservation in a long-term perspective, the villagers have a short-term perspective of the future. I have argued that the villagers' short-term perspective arise from their immediate return economy. The immediate return economy dates back to the life of the Ayoreo as hunters and gatherers, which later has turned into wage labour, still directed toward the return from their labour. As the immediate return lead to an immediate consumption, most of the villagers do not seem to take the long-distanced future into consideration. Hence, I have concluded that the villagers' and Alter Vida's different views of the future affect how they act in the present.

In the study of the implementation of the *plan de manejo forestal* project in Cuyabia, I have seen the value of also taking the neighbouring ranchers into consideration. As I have depicted throughout this thesis, the ranchers are important actors in everyday life in Cuyabia. As the ranchers buy large amounts of posts from the villagers, they affect the villagers' use of the forest in a non-sustainable way. Hence, I have suggested that the ranchers have an impact on the *plan de manejo forestal* project. Further, I have illustrated that the ranchers produce a stereotype of the villagers as lazy and ignorant. I have suggested that the ranchers use this image to legitimate their interaction with the villagers: they provide the "lazy and ignorant" people with work. At the same time as I have claimed that both the ranches and the Alter Vida representatives produce stereotypes of the villagers, I have also depicted how they produce similar stereotypes of each other; as corrupt and taking advantage of the villagers of Cuyabia. This I have illustrated with the aim to clarify that both the Alter Vida representatives and the ranchers try to impose their agenda on the villagers, which, as I have depicted, may have consequences for the *plan de manejo forestal* project.

From what I have summed up so far, I conclude that the *plan de manejo forestal* project most likely will meet challenges in the implementation phase in Cuyabia. As the conflict regarding Cuyabia's land emerged, however, both the villagers and the Alter Vida representatives focused exclusively on the conflict. As the land conflict stopped the villagers in obtaining their land title, at least temporarily, the *plan de manejo forestal*

project was consequently put on hold, as a land title, or being in the process of obtaining a land title is required to have the project approved by the government. Hence, I have argued that Cuyabia is exposed to structural violence, which I claim is a result of many years of land tenure politics benefiting only a few.

I hope that the study I have presented throughout this thesis will be useful in the implementation of similar projects in Cuyabia or elsewhere in the future. In the case of Cuyabia, it would have been interesting to follow the conflict regarding their land, as there are still many uncertainties regarding their situation. If they are able to stay on their land, and manage to obtain a land title and, how will the implementation of Alter Vida's forest project work in the long term? If Cuyabia do not obtain a land title, what will happen to the villagers?

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